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ABSTRACT

This document contains case studies of school-based decision sharing in New South Wales, Australia. Each study examines issues such as goals of the program, implementation, problems, and success factors. Examples of topics discussed in the case studies include parent and community involvement, the school advisory council, and staff involvement in curriculum development.
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School Based Decision Sharing...

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some N.S.W. case studies

Edited by: Greg Andrews
for the
N.S.W. School Based Decision Sharing Project

FOREWORD

The words 'school based decision sharing' are increasingly heard in discussions among teachers and others concerned with education. When people are pressed to define the concept however, the response is often vague – "something about making decisions as close to the learning situation as possible, and the decisions being made by the people they affect". The other common reaction is along the lines of it being a great idea, educationally and administratively sound but totally unworkable, too difficult, or too fraught with dangers.

This collection of case studies is an attempt to bring some clarity to both of these types of reaction. Firstly, the studies aim to help define the concept of school based decision sharing through practice – recognizing of course that the situations described are certainly not the beginning or the end of decision sharing; the possibilities are far greater than any one collection could adequately cover. Secondly, the studies point to some of the positive benefits that schools derive from decision sharing and indicate that many of the concerns that are expressed are unfounded.

The studies were all written by the practitioners themselves. They all welcome inquiries from anyone interested in learning more from their experience. It is hoped that the exchange of ideas and information in this way will provide a basis of optimism for the type of communication and cooperation that is possible among all members of a school community.

Greg Andrews

COMMUNITY AND PRESCHOOL CENTRE

School: Wickham Public School
Address: Hannell & Grey Streets, Wickham 2293
Contact Person: Keith Hudson (Principal), [049] 69 3703

The school is a small inner-city school, classified as 'Disadvantaged'. There are 113 students from families, many of whom are on Social Service or pensions of various kinds. One major project developed to facilitate interaction between the school and its community was the establishment in 1978 of a Community and Preschool Centre at the school including a playgroup and occasional child care.

Aims

The Centre is designed as a meeting place for parents and preschool children which meets some of the social needs and provides a programme for preschool children in a playgroup format; occasional day care one day per week (Friday); and an outlet for mothers who are otherwise housebound. Mothers participate in the playgroup under the guidance of an Early Childhood Education trained teacher and are also the Committee running the Occasional Care Centre which is jointly funded by the Education Department and Family and Children's Services Agencies. The Centre aims to increase community awareness of the benefits of preschool education while providing support and encouragement to parents in management of the Occasional Care Centre, plus relief from continual child care duties and exchange of ideas and solutions to problems through interaction with each other. The long term aim is that this interaction with the school at the preschool level will promote awareness of the school's interest in their children and a more meaningful interaction between parents and staff which may be translated into closer liaison between both at the later school level.

Initiation

The idea for the Centre grew from a request from the Newcastle Neighbourhood Centre that a Liaison Officer be appointed to liaise between the school, the community and the Neighbourhood Centre. The position was advertised by the Education Department and an ex-student was appointed to work full time in the area.

As a result of a door-knock it became clear that women in the community needed somewhere to meet with their children to share problems and be able to leave the children to attend doctors, dentists or to go shopping. An awareness of the lack of social and emotional development of children in the school combined with the economic situation of their families led to the proposal that a toy library be commenced.

Development

Home-visiting became an important link in the programme as the Teacher/Liaison Officer came to know the community and parents began to feel that the school had a genuine interest in them and their children.

In the school, it was found that children starting Kindergarten had restricted language; poor motor control, both fine and gross motor; could not count past three, some not even that; had little idea of colour; knew no nursery rhymes or stories of any kind; and in general, had very restricted experiences. A much higher than normal percentage of children attending the school wore glasses and had hearing and speech defects which may or may not have been due to dietary deficiencies.

During 1978, all four year olds in the Wickham area were enrolled at the local preschool under an arrangement with the Kindergarten Union and with subsidies from the Department of Youth and Community Services.

By arrangement with the Health Commission a speech therapist consented to come to the

school to test children selected by their teachers. Some of these children have gone on to regular speech therapy sessions at the Newcastle Community Health Centre. This service was not a regular Health Commission service but we were able to convince the therapist that due to the numbers it would be more convenient for her to come to the school.

The Playgroup began slowly with a grant of \$300 from the Education Department and equipment from the Newcastle Neighbourhood Centre. Medical students assigned to the Neighbourhood Centre by the University of Newcastle Medical School, helped by providing transport and joining in activities which included barbecues and excursions.

The Toy Library commenced with a grant of \$800 from the Disadvantaged Schools Committee and by the end of 1978 its need was so evident that a further grant of \$2 500 was provided from the same source. Toys in the Library are chosen to stimulate coordination, communication, discrimination as well as to provide fun.

Parents involved with the Committee of the Occasional Care Centre were very dubious at first of their capabilities in handling finances or children but as this project has progressed they have become aware of their skills in these fields and are enthusiastic in encouraging other parents to participate. Their self-confidence has risen so much that they are now taking a greater interest in the affairs of the Parents' and Citizens' Association and questioning the use of monies and facilities at the school, as well as investigating ways they can help to provide a better education for their children.

In early February this year, this Committee helped run a seminar on Children's Play as their contribution to the International Year of the Child and were hosts to 120 mothers and their children from playgroups and preschools from all over the Newcastle area. This was so successful they are looking forward to repeating the seminar later in the year.

Problems

Parents in this area need continual encouragement due to their low self-image which is understandable as Wickham is one of six 'highly disadvantaged' suburbs of Newcastle investigated by Professor Vinson and reported in *Crime and Disadvantage*. A survey taken in the school in 1978 supports Professor Vinson's findings as approximately 30% of families attending this school were supported by pensions and those on unemployment relief in this area were six times the national average.

It evolved that the need for occasional child care was so great that from a permit for ten children in 1978, the children now catered for totals twenty on a one day per week basis under the supervision of a preschool trained teacher and a registered nurse. The nurse is employed by the Committee of the Wickham Occasional Care Centre and children are cared for from birth to five years.

The increase in the number of children in care required renovation of the building and the installation of infant sized toilets.

The Centre is used one day per week (Friday) from 9 am to 5 pm for occasional child care and on Tuesday mornings from 10 am until noon for playgroup. The Toy Library operates each afternoon from Monday to Thursday and through an arrangement with the Child Development Unit of the Health Commission the Centre is used on Wednesdays for occasional care of handicapped children (although this may be curtailed due to lack of funding).

Mothers have come to see this Centre as a 'drop in' place to talk things over, seek advice and share successes and disasters as well as a general meeting place to get them out of their homes.

Success Factors

Factors which have lead to the success of the Centre appear to have been:

- i the foresight of the Principal in supporting and encouraging the programme suggested by the Teacher/Liaison Officer and allowing free interaction between her and the community and Newcastle Neighbourhood Centre;
- ii the support and interest of the staff and sharing of their expertise concerning families in the community;
- iii the encouragement from the Disadvantaged Schools Committee to abandon traditional

approaches to allow interaction between families and school as the primary aim of the project;

iv the interaction between government departments, ie:

- the Education Department provided premises, salary and equipment;
- Department of Youth and Community Services advised on requirements and programmes for occasional day care; also provided subsidies for preschoolers to attend preschools;
- Family and Children's Services Agencies provided a starting grant for the Occasional Care Centre and also evaluate the scheme on a regular basis, providing feedback on similar schemes throughout the state;
- Health Department psychologists from the Newcastle Community Health Team drop-in and talk with mothers on an informal basis and provide a back-up service for the teacher and nurse.

v the growth in the self-confidence of parents involved and their improved self-image.

No one factor has been responsible for the success of this scheme, but rather the total and continual interaction between them all.

COMMUNITY CENTRED CURRICULUM

School: St. Joseph's Primary School
Address: 26 Oxford Street, Newtown 2042
Contact Person: Sister Kristin Dawson (Principal), 51 8020
Ms Eulanda Moscare (Resource Teacher).

This is a small disadvantaged school located in the inner-city with a steady enrolment of 221 pupils. 20% of the population is Australian and the remaining population represents 17 other nationalities. The major programme designed to facilitate interaction between the school and the community is Community Involvement and Curriculum Development. This was drawn and implemented last year and is a continuing programme of the school for the next two years. The whole process of formulation and implementation of the programme involves a lot of school level decision sharing.

Aims

The primary objective of the programme on Community Involvement is to develop a school community where staff, children and parents may achieve christian maturity. It also aims to help parents understand what the school is trying to achieve for their children; understand and accept each other's ethnic origin; get involved in the school and its activities; and share their talents with the community. The long term goal of the programme is to get parents gradually involved in planning and decision making.

The main goal of the Curriculum Development programme is to construct a curriculum that will cater for the needs of a multicultural school - a two way process of interaction between all cultural aspects of society. Other objectives which are fairly essential are as follows:

"Show a functional and significant school based policy and programme. Provide guidelines in terms of sequential skills, content and strategies for team teaching and integrated curriculum. Develop effective classroom management and relate the school to the community and the community to the school."

Initiation

The programme emanated from a strong philosophy behind multicultural schools and from a christian principle on community development. Having this in mind, the Principal presented the idea in a staff meeting. There was an overwhelming response from the teachers so that in the next staff meeting possibilities were discussed. Background reading was made available to teachers and resource people were invited to share their ideas. Some parents who manifested keen interest in the school were asked to give ideas on the subject. Teachers visited different community centres. As a result of these activities the basic concepts of the programme were developed.

Implementation

Two specific examples of school level decision sharing were - the formulation of school policy and the drawing up of submissions for disadvantaged schools funding. The preparation involved the total staff who had considerable experience in the past two years in formulating goals and objectives. There was also a variety of ethnic composition of the staff which was another advantage in a multicultural school. Other members of the proposal committee were consultants from teachers' colleges, Catholic Education Office and resource people from community centres. These personnel helped not only in the initial stages but they also gave continual help and support in programme implementation. Key parents who were interested in the progress of the school became part of the team. One of them had a fair amount of experience on multicultural education which was a great help.

The proposal, among others, included funding for the release time of the Principal and for

hiring a Resource Teacher and Teacher's Aide whose duties were designed to directly or indirectly assist in the implementation of the proposed programme.

The submission was approved. The school year 1978 was the year of action. The initial step in developing school and community interaction was geared towards building confidence in both parents and teachers. Activities listed below served the purpose:

- 1 Informal greetings and conversation between teachers and parents who took their children to and from the school, was a good start. This led to cups of coffee in the staff room. Later, they, themselves decided to fill in their time with worthwhile activities. Since then, Monday morning was a day of work and leisure. Parents did craft work and organized international cooking demonstration lessons. They shared each others' talents in preparing their own ethnic food. The Teacher's Aide, who was skilful in craft, assisted them and the Resource Teacher coordinated the activities. This has become an effective venue for communication between parents and between school and parents.
- 2 Some experienced Australian parents took the initiative of organizing a teacher-parent get-together dance which was well attended. A family picnic followed and the response was also encouraging. These activities developed a strong link between the school and the community. Thus, gave birth to the Parents and Friends Organization. The most salient aspects of their constitution express the contention that parents should work hand in hand with teachers where the welfare of their children is concerned. Further, they stated that teachers should attend parents' meetings and parents in return should also attend staff meetings thus providing a two-way interaction.

Since then parent involvement was well on the road, now assured and confident, they took an active part in other school activities. The significant ones are listed below.

- a) The Greek parents sponsored a "Greek Night" for the Parents and Friends fund raising campaign. Aspects of decision sharing was evident in this activity as parents together with the teachers decided what project to propose or equipment to buy for the school. The process involved was also significant in developing the social and cultural skills of the school community who enjoyed this particular function.
- b) Inviting parents to school assemblies is worth noting. In consonance with the celebration of Education Week, the total school worked on an Australian Theme. A good number of parents came to school to attend the school assembly. Later they visited classrooms to see pupil's exhibits.
- c) School excursions is another effective theme. Still in connection with Education Week, parents, teachers and pupils went to Old Sydney Town to learn about Australian culture. Since then some parents attend school excursions regularly.
- d) Interviews with parents at the end of each term was a good means of building rapport between parents and teachers. In this way, a cooperative effort to help the children is enhanced.
- e) The staff formulated a questionnaire depicting parents' family background, educational attainment, employment and educational expectations. This questionnaire served as a guide in home visits of teacher volunteers. Parents and teachers were given the opportunity to know each other better, thus allowing them a free discussion on the school and their children.
- f) Occasionally, during Parents' and Friends' meetings a video tape is presented. The programme shows classroom practices prepared by the teachers themselves. This is a very effective method in explaining to the parents what the school is doing for their children. Questions from parents are discussed, they voice their opinions, and sometimes even make suggestions on how to improve the educational process. Through this method parents get involved in decision sharing to a certain level.

A sound parent-teacher relationship was achieved as a result of the abovementioned activities. Parents developed self-assurance and confidence, understanding, tolerance and acceptance of each others' culture. Since then parents come to visit the school more often. They visit classes to see lessons, do tuckshop work, help in the Library, borrow books in other languages than English, act as resource people or members in a panel discussion on a multicultural theme, assist some teachers in giving individual attention to children and attend staff meetings to

voice their opinion on what they think the school should achieve for their children.

Community involvement built a strong rapport between the school and the community. It also strengthened the integration of the school and the parents; thus providing freely an opportunity for parent-teacher interaction.

School Based Curriculum Development

Decision sharing on Curriculum Development was primarily the role of the teachers and consultants. Parents played a supportive role and children a source of information.

The school policy serves as guiding principle of the school based Curriculum Development. Steps to be taken were formulated in a series of staff meetings. Subject areas were integrated as follows: Communication, Environmental, Mathematics and Leisure. Each group worked on their areas during official time once every fortnight. The Principal and the Resource Teacher relieved them from classroom duties. To assist teachers the following were facilitated:

1. Teachers attended inservice training and workshops on Curriculum Development.
2. Consultants were invited as resource people to work with different groups.
3. Reading materials and other references were made available.
4. Teachers visited laboratories, schools and other centres thought to be significantly related to Curriculum Development.
5. A continuous evaluation process of group performance was made possible by reporting progress of work and discussing problems encountered during group sessions and staff meetings.
6. The process involved in Curriculum Development proved effective in enhancing teachers' professional growth. Through group interaction, teachers reached out to each other in friendly relationship and practical innovations were created. For instance, a "brain storming" session was organized by the Environmental Group. The Communication Group put up signs, names and labels to indicate the school office, rooms and other important facilities for the benefit of parents and newcomers to the school. Sharing ideas and gathering relevant information were results of group process. Community resources were used in the school thus providing opportunity for children to experience first hand information.

Curriculum Development developed openness among teachers. The project entails a long range process but the process in itself becomes the ongoing programme. New ideas constructed by the teachers are put into practice in the classrooms. This gives them a sense of fulfilment and a feeling of pride in their own task of discovering and creating. As a result new teaching innovations came out for the 1979 school year.

A good example of parents total involvement in decision sharing in one aspect of Curriculum Development was the drawing up of submissions for a multicultural grant. During one of the Parent & Friends meetings they expressed their desire for a music programme as part of the school curriculum offering. They wished their children to learn musical instruments and ethnic songs. With the support of the teachers, parents drew up a proposal. The submission which was endorsed by the school was a success. A music teacher visited the school once a week to work with children as part of the school curriculum enrichment programme. At present the school is equipped with various ethnic musical instruments.

Children are involved in decision sharing to a certain level. Student's Council was organized where children are given the opportunity to plan and discuss some of their activities; formulate minor rules to govern themselves, discuss problems and recommend solutions. Feedback from this group interaction served as a source of information which is one of the important factors considered in deciding what skills should be included in the school curriculum.

Problems

The main problems encountered in Community Involvement were language difficulties and cultural differences. But as parents came to know each other better, these problems were overcome. Since the school is used as a venue for Adult Migrant Education, some parents attended the English class and thus improved their communication. Another advantage is the fact that some of the staff members speak two or three languages. In more difficult cases the

school employs interpreters especially during arranged interviews in school and in home visits. The school activities designed for community involvement in one way or another helped parents develop their communication skills.

The most significant problem encountered in Curriculum Development was the teachers' lack of expertise and experience. These were the elements that destroyed their confidence. But as teachers grew together in friendly relationship through constant group work, they became supportive of each other which led to encouragement and exchanging of ideas. The Resource Teacher gathered books and other materials for background reading. Teachers were invited to attend inservice training on Curriculum Development and visit schools and centres who were working on similar projects. Professional advice from consultants also helped a lot. Likewise, the total support of the Principal to the programme solved the said problem.

Success Factors

A series of evaluations indicated the success factors of the programme:

- i) Full commitment of the staff and parents to the programme.
- ii) Leadership of the Principal - her positive attitudes towards school based decision sharing. Her release time which allowed her to liaise with teachers and parents and to oversee the whole programme.
- iii) The flexibility of the programme was a distinct factor. The school was willing to take the risk of trying new innovations. Personnel were patient in the use of the trial and error method.
- iv) An overall effort of team work, and enthusiasm of all concerned with the optimism that the programme would work.
- v) Availability of human and physical resources either through the disadvantaged school funding or through community centres.
- vi) The good fortune to have some leaders among Australian parents who had good attitudes towards involvement of ethnic groups.
- vii) Services of the Resource Teacher and the Teacher's Aide.
- viii) Visit to other innovative schools and community centres.
- ix) Inservice education attended by parents and staff, staff meetings and staff development days.
- x) Continuing evaluation which was done regularly to ensure the success of the programme.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMME

School: Balmain Public School
Address: Eaton Street, Balmain 2041
Contact Persons: Ms R. Cumming (Principal), 82 1054
Ms W. Starkie (Resource Teacher).

Community involvement is a basic part of this school's philosophy. The local school serves the needs of the local community by making provision for each of the community's children wherever possible. This involves the integration into whole school activities of children with special needs, while also making special provision for each of these children. The differing groups of children in this school are: a few bright children, a few slow learners, a Downs Syndrome child, seriously language-impaired children, emotionally disturbed children, children with physical development problems, autistic children and children with physically deprived backgrounds.

This philosophy is implemented through the provision of appropriate, relevant and attractive materials for each child's use; the provision of appropriate teaching materials for staff and parent aides; the provision of appropriate hardware to enable teachers to meet the needs of groups of children simultaneously; and the provision of attractive learning centres for children, teachers and aides.

There has been direct benefit to the children from programmes which have developed community-school relations. In fact, some of the programmes which have been successful in this school could never have been carried through without direct parental involvement. These programmes include water safety, camping and literacy programmes to name just a few.

Results have indicated that the objectives of the community involvement programmes are being realized. The various sub-groups are coming together. The parent-group is better informed and more familiar with the school and its operations. Thus many parents are becoming more directly involved with the education of their children as the school is perceived as an integral part of the community.

Courses for Parents

Specific courses have helped develop this rapport. The "Help a Child to Learn to Read Course" aimed to explain how reading is taught, to encourage parents to help their children at home and to train parents to assist staff in reading time in the classroom. This course has been run four times now including a refresher course in 1979 with emphasis on comprehension skills. Many parents help in the reading programme, some for the third consecutive year.

The "English for Migrants Course" and the "Adult Literacy Course" aimed to develop specific skills for community members in need of these services.

The "Maths for Mums Course" had similar aims to the "Help a Child to Learn to Read Course" but in the maths area. Parents now assist in maths in the classroom. As an extension of this there is planned a new course for 1979 called "Investigations - How Parents Can Help".

In 1977 and 1978 a course was run for children and parents entering Kindergarten the following term. "Kinder 78" and "Kinder 79" courses aimed to introduce parents and children to the layout, routines and personnel of the school so as to make entry into Kindergarten as easy as possible. Parents were given information and discussion sessions on school philosophy and aims, school systems and expectations and how parents could help their children benefit maximally from school experiences. This course will be run again for new enrolments for 1980.

It has been requested by parents that a new course be begun on parent-effectiveness training. This would cover a wide range of topics such as social and emotional development in children, behaviour problems and coping skills for parents.

Development

This community involvement did not emerge rapidly but developed gradually through formal and informal interaction situations.

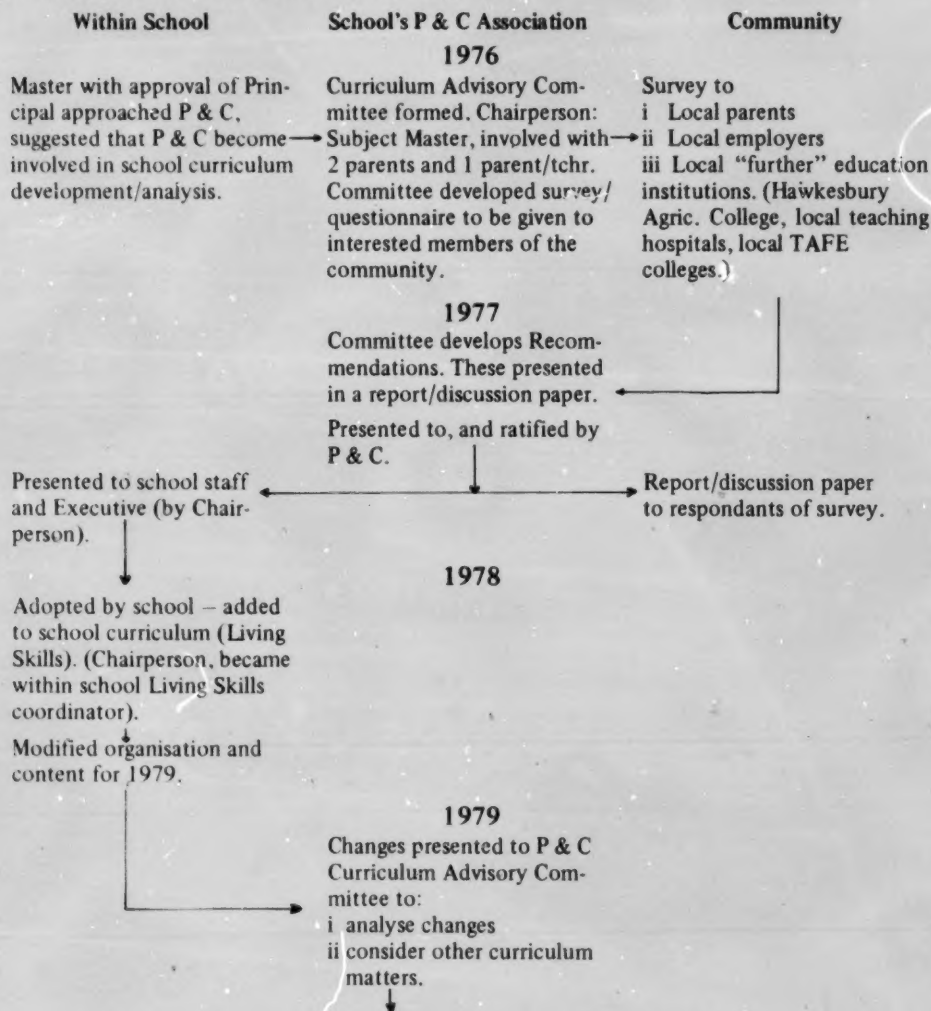
In 1977 informal chats with parents, individually and in groups, encouraged participation in courses, developed relationships and sifted out attitudes and needs in a non-threatening situation. Courses led to in-classroom and in-school interaction opportunities. Parents and staff joined representatives of the Disadvantaged Schools Committee to discuss the aims and operation of this committee. This discussion resulted in parents assisting in policy-making and demonstrating their support by signing the school submission to the Disadvantaged Schools Committee. Parents joined in the first school camp at Deer Park in 1977 and have assisted more and more in the two subsequent camps. As was stated above, courses such as the water confidence course and many school excursions would have been virtually impossible without parental help.

Formal and informal interaction with parents, including social events, has led to sound relationships and the acceptance of parents and staff as individuals and respected adults. Parental participation in this school has always been led by the Principal and staff inviting the parents to become involved. Frequent liaison with parents in an informal manner has allowed the school to set realistic goals for the school and its community and has also enabled staff to anticipate the needs and desires of parents; thus keeping the initiative on the school's behalf and avoiding any confrontation or demanding-conflict situations. Parents view themselves as part of a team working for the good of future generations in academic areas such as reading and maths and in more informal areas such as diet, nutrition and social development. The Community Room in the school is becoming a focal point for future development and interaction.

CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING

School: Richmond High School
Address: Lennox Street, Richmond 2753
Contact Person: Doug Pope (Principal), [045] 78 1177
 Jon Rickard (Science Master),

Over the past three years, Richmond High School has been developing a programme of curriculum decision making involving the staff, the P & C and community members. Historically, the programme has developed in the following way:



Aims of Programme

- To involve the P & C in issues of an educational nature, (in addition to the usual fund raising activities for the school).
- To broaden the range of activities of the P & C so as to increase the interest and relevance of

this parent body.

- c) To use the perceptions of the parents of the students of the school to try to improve the curriculum provided by the school.
- d) To survey the local community, to determine local community needs of education.
- e) To provide for students a relevant and meaningful curriculum, atuned to the needs of parents and the local community.
- f) To gain recommendations concerning the schools' future curriculum, which by the manner of presentation are readily considered and (hopefully) adopted, by the school's Executive and staff.

Development

The programme was initiated by the Science Master, and developed in the first stages in consultation with the Principal. Executive meeting endorsed the initiatives being undertaken.

Later stages of the programme were developed by the Curriculum Advisory Committee.

The Science Master became Chairperson of the "Curriculum Advisory Committee (the Parents and Citizens Committee), and then the "Living Skills Coordinator" within the school.

This was done to ensure that the programme maintained the impetus with which it began.

The P & C Committee was specifically a "Curriculum Advisory Committee". The title set the terms of reference. The goodwill of the teaching staff toward the programme was essential; and the term 'Advisory' ensured this. Staff accepted that a P & C Committee should tender advice on curriculum matters but then the staff should be able to exercise professional judgement in considering recommendations.

The manner in which advice was tendered, and the staff considered recommendations ensured that emotive positions were not taken, but rather, parents and teachers considered responses on their merits.

Problems

The P & C and the members of the community who responded to the survey/questionnaire were not typical of the community as a whole.

Respondents generally represented those interested in education, those interested in gaining "good" education for their children and those requiring favourable standards of education for vocation and prevocational training.

Thus extrapolating community needs from a biased sample is difficult. Should the vocal minority speak for all? Should the silent (disinterested?) majority be disenfranchised?

The above problem was overcome in the following way. Advice from respondents was considered; and the relevance of this advice to the whole school population was considered.

Success Factors

The success of the P & C's Curriculum Advisory Committee was dependent on:

- 1 Parents perceiving the relevance of being involved in the development of school curriculum.
- 2 The Chairperson and parents of the committee being able to work well together. The choice of the P & C in determining committee members must be commended.
- 3 The terms of reference, ie being concerned with curriculum, and being advisory. That the committee considered curriculum matters ensured that 'teacher bashing' was not pre-eminent in discussion, and had nothing to do with the recommendations. That the committee was an Advisory Committee ensured that school staff accepted their role in the overall process.

Staff felt that they had the ability to accept or reject the 'advice', and so the formation of the Curriculum Advisory Committee did not challenge teachers' feelings of security. Changes have come about slowly and were easily accommodated by staff.

- 4 The relevance of the recommendations. Had the recommendations been trivial, or not suited to the school and its philosophy, the implementation of such advice would not have been possible. Recommendations were readily assimilated within the school curriculum showing the suitability of the recommendations.

INVOLVING COMMUNITY IN POLICY AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

School: Sackville Street Public School
Address: Sackville & Bradley Streets, Ingleburn 2565
Contact Person: John Pankhurst (Principal), 605 3874

Sackville Street School is located in the burgeoning Liverpool region, southwest of Sydney. The clientele of the school is drawn from a wide cross section of the community with most socio-economic groups represented. The major thrust of the school since its commencement has been to involve parents in as many aspects of the school's life as is possible.

The process of involvement has so far fallen into three phases:

- The management and provision of school resources.
- The formation of school policy.
- The formation of school curricula.

Each phase forms part of a developmental process intended to resolve the diversity of opinion in the community concerning the education of the children. It is also hoped that problems associated with families moving into a new community will be alleviated if the school is responsive to parents' needs and aspirations.

Initiation

Because of a firm commitment to community involvement by the Principal, the Mistress of the Infants Department and the staff, together with corresponding responses by parents and resource people within the community, the responsibility for the various component programmes has been widely dispersed among parents, teachers and the community. The various parent/teacher committees and the Principal are all responsible for the continued existence of the programmes.

As a new school with expensive facilities in an area where facilities of all kinds are scarce, the Principal initially requested assistance from parents to ensure that proper use was being made of the resources available. In response, the P & C Association established a Hall and Grounds Committee to make recommendations as to the use of the school facilities and the expenditure of income earned and to set long term objectives for the development of the school grounds and buildings. Interested parents and the Principal met at committee members' homes during the first year to reach agreement and it was found to be a very amicable process.

Development

Whilst the Hall and Grounds Committee was active other sub-committees of the P & C such as the Social and Finance Committee, Canteen Committee, a Day Club and Uniform Committee were established to provide resources, assist in the formation of a community and make decisions in their areas of competence.

Following this and using a variety of techniques, inputs were obtained as to what parents wished of the school, for themselves and for their children. Principal and staff classified this material as that already being attempted, that which could be introduced, that which was feasible and that which was hard at that stage. Where possible the wishes of parents were implemented immediately and they were given the opportunity to evaluate to what extent this had been done. With the resultant confidence in the belief that their wishes would be noted and if possible acceded to, more input sessions were held and the resulting material was processed by the Principal into an interim statement of general objectives for the school. After these had been considered and amended by the staff it was decided to approach the P & C to add a policy function to the Hall and Grounds Committee so that recommendations concerning policy could be made to both P & C and staff. This was done and the enlarged committee with equal representation of staff and parents assumed the responsibility for producing a draft school policy document. When the document had been further amended during a series of staff, P & C and committee meetings it was returned for final processing. A general meeting

of parents, teachers and community made the final amendments and adopted the result as school policy. Two years had passed.

As this stage approached its conclusion the Regional Curriculum team was invited to speak on school based decision making as an attraction at P & C and Day Club meetings. Subsequently the Principal was requested to arrange inservice courses dealing with parent participation in curriculum construction. The Regional Inservice Committee suggested that an inschool grant be sought to develop the proposal and this was done to organise a parent/teacher venture in writing units for the school science, language and social science curricula exploiting as a unifying theme the strong concern that the community had expressed for the preservation of the local environment.

Problems

To date the programme has moved reasonably smoothly. It has been deliberately a low key operation in order to avoid the problems which usually accompany rapid change in Australia. All of the problems which have been met have resulted from attempts to move too rapidly. An attempt to move into curriculum development before policy was finalised proved overwhelming for parents. Pressure by the Principal to finalise the school policy review too rapidly resulted in some disquiet among staff. Both problems were overcome simply by slowing down the rate of progress.

The only major problem still remaining lies in the communication of a largely complex and somewhat technical policy document to the average newcomer. To this end a 'plain language' school policy is in preparation and it is hoped this will help solve the problem and enable newcomers to identify the school's beliefs quickly.

Success Factors

The factors leading to the success of the work undertaken so far are fairly complex. However, there needs to be a genuine commitment to parent/teacher participation by all parties involved. There also has to be a willingness to take risks, as often the participants are breaking new ground and guidelines are just not available.

Several apparent paradoxes must be noted, too, otherwise feelings of inadequacy may result. The more parents learn about the school through bulletins, documents and personal contacts, the less they tend to make minor dissensions known. Thus as programmes such as this progress, opportunities for contact have to be created and indeed sought quite actively otherwise the school will lapse into operating within a vacuum.

INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

School: Buxton Public School
Address: Wallaroo Road, Buxton 2571
Contact Person: Richard Hart (Principal), [046] 81 8229

Buxton Public School is a small third class school situated in the southwest corner of Liverpool region on the fringe of Wollondilly Shire. The school population of 64 is served by three teachers and has grown from 36 in the past three years.

For many years the school lacked resources, was inadequately housed (eg virtually no storage space, unlined classroom) had a constantly changing staff and received very little support from the community.

Financial support through LJOs, the Regional Maintenance Programme and the Disadvantaged Schools Programme has solved most of the physical and resource problems of the school and has helped to ameliorate the problem of a constantly changing staff. The problem of how to create and sustain community interest, support and pride in the school however, became the most difficult problem to solve.

Process

Parents and community began to realize that their school was not held in very high esteem by the local and surrounding communities. Those present at the P & C meeting that initiated a greater degree of community involvement with the school were **honestly** informed by the Principal of the problems facing the school and how **their** help and support were needed to solve them.

The programmes to develop community interest, support and pride in the school were then initiated by the School's Disadvantaged Schools Committee (three teachers and four parents) after informal consultation with other community members. All developmental work on the programme was done after school hours, at school or in the homes of committee members. Ideas were put forward, discussed and either accepted or rejected until a three-year plan, aimed at solving the problem, was adopted. All communication throughout has been on an informal person-to-person basis.

The programmes devised are briefly described below:

- 1 Making use of existing community skills through voluntary work on:
 - a) the development of a one hectare nature area and outdoor teaching space;
 - b) the construction of an 'Old Australia' play village in the school grounds;
 - c) the development of barbecue and sporting areas; and
 - d) the improvement of the school's physical environment by the construction of gardens and rockeries and the installation of playground equipment.
- 2 The use of community members as sporting coaches.
- 3 The use of community members, through cooperation with teachers, as
 - a) library helpers;
 - b) reading helpers; and
 - c) craft helpers.
- 4 The encouragement of community groups to use the school grounds and buildings for meetings (eg Progress Association, Bush Fire Brigade) and social occasions (eg barbecues, outdoor dances).
- 5 The initiation of a school/community camping programme and school/community picnics.
- 6 The development of sporting facilities for the use of both the school and the community.

The three main programmes are described in more detail:

The Nature Area

The nature area is a one hectare area, fenced from the rest of the school playground, that has been developed by the people of Buxton. Some of its features are:

- a 70 metre path linking the centre of the area with the classrooms (constructed and paid for by the P & C Association);
- water reticulation to the area (PWD);
- electric light and power (donated materials and voluntary labour);
- a hexagonal concrete outdoor class and barbecue area (disadvantaged funds, voluntary labour);
- fibreglass seating (donated);
- two small pond/rockeries (donated);
- four large ponds; three of which are linked by waterfalls and fed by a recirculating pump system (Disadvantaged funds, donated labour, LJO for pump system);
- a permanent track system (constructed by handicapped men from Stonequarry Lodge);
- a bird feeding area (constructed by the children);
- over 300 native plants to supplement the natural vegetation of the area (planted by the children, Disadvantaged funds).

The area has been designed as a multi-purpose area for use by children from this and other schools as well as the adults of the community.

The 'Old Australia' Play Village

This area has been designed as an attractive play area for children. Some of its features include:

- a verandahed shop;
- a three-room cottage;
- a settler's log cabin;
- a lock-up;
- a stockade;
- a vegetable patch;
- a split-rail fenced paddock;
- a bantam enclosure.

All labour for this project has been voluntary. All of the three quarter size buildings have been commenced and are nearing completion. Many donations of materials (eg 80 year old shingles, wood burning stoves, water tanks, ploughs, old wares etc) have supplemented Disadvantaged funding of this project.

School/Community Sports Court

This court will be completed (by contract) during the first half of 1979. The all-weather court will comprise:

- a netball court;
- a tennis court;
- a volley ball court.

The court is being funded in the following manner:

Disadvantaged School's Funds	\$8000.00
Wollondilly Shire	\$3000.00
P & C Association	\$2000.00

The role of the community in this instance is confined to administration of the court (a committee of local people has been elected), raising money to help finance it and using it.

Problems

The main problem to date has been one of finding sufficient time to complete a fairly comprehensive list of projects (community members, including teachers, have other obligations and interests to pursue). This problem has been overcome largely by reassessing the situation, slowing down as the need arises and constantly updating proposed deadlines for the completion of projects (in short, the three-year plan has become a four-year plan).

Success Factors

- 1 The willingness of:
 - a) staff and some community members to give leadership and display initiative;
 - b) the Liverpool Region Disadvantaged Schools Committee to fund major projects in a small school;
 - c) P & C Association and Wollondilly Shire Council to share in the cost of some projects (eg School/Community Sports Court);
 - d) teachers to become involved in the affairs of the local community both socially and in community organisation;
 - e) teachers to encourage community members into the school and make them feel welcome; and
 - f) the Department of Education to coordinate maintenance work, LJOs etc with school/community projects (eg provision of outdoor seating, water reticulation and a recirculating pump for the nature area, provision of playground equipment, turfing etc).
- 2 The size of the school and the community makes contact and communication easier than in a larger situation.
- 3 Some of the projects enable people in the community to utilize their skills and abilities and to feel that they can, for the first time, make a useful contribution to the school (eg concreting, electrical and plumbing work, carpentry etc).
- 4 The nature of many of the projects makes it easier for community members to see that progress is being made.
- 5 Community members will derive direct benefit from some projects (eg barbecue areas, sports court).
- 6 Having sufficient area to accommodate the projects (eg one hectare of bushland for the nature area).

PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMME

School: Revesby Public School
Address: Victoria Road, Revesby 2212
Contact Person: Wilma Cook (Principal), 77 8255

Revesby Public School is situated in a working class - lower middle class area of mainly light industries. Being an old 'established' area there is a definite stability in the population. The school has a small migrant population. Its physical layout presents some difficulty in general administration on a total school basis. The Infant's Department is separated from the Primary School by a road and is quite some distance away. Opportunities for staff to meet easily are therefore few.

The school had had three principals in three years. In 1976/76 the staff and current principal decided to develop an Aims and Objectives document to guide the school's development and provide continuity of policy.

Aims

Relative to parental involvement, this document states:

- i "We aim to grow in an understanding and appreciation of people."
- ii "Communication channels within the school are wide open **at any time**."
- iii "**We are united in the broad aim** of laying the foundations of desirable attitudes of learning and living throughout Revesby Public School."
- iv "To consider all aspects of child development and our **community needs** in the drawing up of subject curricula."
- v "To be interested in and sympathetic with the problems and the attitudes of the parents in this area; to note on the Pupil Record Card information which may **help** the school to understand the child's 'other world'."
- vi "**To keep parents informed** of school happenings and of changes in educational thinking and to involve them in evaluation of same where possible."
- vii "To seek opportunities to **talk and meet with parents**, eg:
Parent/Teacher evenings
P & C meetings
Informally at school functions
Canteen
Sports
Classroom involvement."
- viii "**To involve parents** wherever possible in the school - eg:
invitation to excursions
invitation to class functions
invitation to school functions
help with projects, etc.
school committees - teacher/parent."
- ix "To take the initiative in making contact with a parent in order to benefit a child."

Implementation

Following on from the statement of Aims and Objectives an "opening" for parental involvement was seen because of the enthusiasm of a nucleus of parents willing to "help" at the school, in the usual avenues of P & C involvement. Staff relations through parent/teacher interviews, P & C meetings and sporting functions were quite relaxed so initial approaches were made to some more interested parents by teachers and by the Principal at school functions for classroom assistance. The usual, "I don't think I'd be good enough, I didn't have much education," was expressed, but with friendly coaxing and coaching by teachers they proceeded slowly to involve the more "adventurous" parents.

Staff do not screen parents as they find that only very keen people volunteer, but they do set a pattern for parents to follow and teachers carefully supervise this. Since 1976 the "parent aide force" has increased and it is pleasing to note that "all round" teacher and parent "fears" are decreasing tremendously. Only good has developed from the project as parents feel that teachers have nothing to hide and that their problems are not so different from teachers in the process of caring for children.

"Cups of coffee, sharing the odd joke, chatting about children specifically and in general, gentle persuasion and showing that we have confidence in them respecting their ability in a number of fields, ie craft, cooking (a number have excellent academic qualifications) and just conversing about everyday things that concern us as people, have helped our teachers and parents to feel that teachers and parents are, after all, still human beings living and working in the same society with the same highs and lows which affect us all in life. It is difficult to express on paper how our parent project has developed as, just like Topsy, it 'grewed'."

Parents already involved have "passed the word" - "Miss Jones could use a mum or dad to do such and such a job."

Parents are involved in the school in a number of ways:

1 *Library Committee*

Consists of Librarian (Convenor), Principal, Infants' Mistress, Resource Teacher, P & C President and Secretary, a Primary and Infants teacher, two infants' parents and three Primary parents. Apart from helping with practical work in the Library, the Committee formulates policy in relation to finance, the housing of materials, the review of books for purchase and appraisal of books admitted on the shelves.

2 *Music*

A volunteer pianist and guitarist assist the junior and senior choirs, assist with the choral festival, and play for all school functions.

3 *Courses for Parents*

A Maths course over a three month period was held for parents of years 3-5 by staff, as was the four night mini-maths course. Future courses are planned from parent requests.

4 *Staff Meetings*

- i. P & C Executive, Canteen Supervisors and Library Committee representative attend the first meeting on the first day of year because matters of general organisation are pertinent to them. They also attend the staff luncheon on that day.
- ii. Interested parents are invited to attend the next session of staff meetings on Teaching Method and join in on a workshop basis. (Link with Curriculum Committee.)

5 *Curriculum Committee*

The Staff/Parent Curriculum Committee's purpose is to review, extend the present curricula determined by the 1975/76/77 staff and Curriculum Committees. Parents were circulated with a notice about the formation of the Committee soliciting their participation and a meeting of interested parents was held who were addressed by the Principal and a Regional Curriculum Consultant. Parents were then appointed for a two year term with an option of standing down.

6 *Parent Classroom Aides*

Upwards of thirty parents regularly assist in classrooms. Parents are involved in reading schemes (oral, comprehension), craft, spelling, mathematics and cooking. Additionally, parents help teachers prepare worksheets and assist with small groups on excursions, and assist extensively with sport.

A formal meeting of voluntary pupil aides was held in first term this year. The meeting was conducted on a workshop discussion basis using the following format:

- i) Welcome and initial preamble by the Principal. Parents wore tags for identification with each other. The number of parents present was thirty, with three apologies.
- ii) The aims of the morning's work (which lasted three hours because of interest) were explained and, following instructions to choose a group leader, parents broke into discussion groups, six in number.

For Discussion

- a) Do we need a name for identification purposes only? What name?
 - b) What problems have you experienced in your work with the children?
 - c) In what other ways could you help in the classroom?
 - d) Do you feel the need to meet as a group again? If so, what format could it take?
- iii) After a "healthy" discussion period of $\frac{1}{4}$ hour the group had morning tea and resumed whole group reporting/discussion. Some fine points came out of this, some dealt with, others to be used in future meetings.
- iv) Evaluation of morning followed and all agreed to meet again and a guest speaker was to be arranged (Teaching of Reading) for the next meeting.

7 Inservice

Parents have attended courses on curriculum development and parent involvement in schools and are encouraged to attend as many of these courses as are available to them. A number of parents also attend education courses at the local CAE.

8 Money Raising

As in most schools parents and staff work together to raise funds for the school. A non-executive member of the school staff acts as a Liaison Officer with the parent committees.

Success Factors

"The parental involvement which is developing at the school is a healthy involvement with all avenues of communication open. Of course, both parents/teachers are realistic enough to ask the question, 'Is the parental involvement too disruptive? If so, what steps to take?' While we are ever aware of the 'goods and not so goods' of our scheme and can discuss these quite truthfully, we feel that our plans for the welfare of the children in our care will be healthy and that our 'open approach' may lead to a more tolerant understanding between teachers and parents."

PARENT SUPPORT AIDE PROGRAMME

School: Lindsay Park Public School
Address: Thames Street, Wollongong 2500
Contact Person: Merv Hall (Principal) [042] 29 2487

Lindsay Park Primary School commenced the use of parents in the classroom in 1974 when a teacher invited the parents of the pupils to attend the school for set periods each week. The parents were divided into two groups and each group attended for one afternoon per week. The teacher then prepared group lessons on very basic teaching procedures. These notes were sent home prior to the teaching day, and parents came along prepared for their lessons.

The name Parent Support Aide (PSA) was given to parents participating and the following set of rules was given to each parent before they commenced operating:-

PSA Rules

The Parent agrees:-

- a) To work under the control of the Principal, and to accept all decisions made by the Principal.
- b) That the courtesies of the school should apply for Parent Support Aides. Any absences by the Parent Support Aides should be notified beforehand.
- c) That any matters of a confidential nature in relation to pupils or the school should be treated accordingly.
- d) That the Parent Support Aide may not physically or mentally punish any child.
- e) That the Parent Support Aide is operating to enhance the education of pupils and to give satisfaction to the Parent Support Aide. Once these aims cease to exist (from the Principal's or the Parent Support Aide's viewpoint), then the service should be terminated.
- f) That the Principal has the right to terminate the service of any Parent Support Aide at any time without explanation.
- g) That the Parent Support Aide will confine activities to those planned by the teacher and agreed upon.
- h) That the Parent Support Aide may be allocated to and relate to a member of the staff as appointed by the Principal.

Implementation

This programme was slightly enlarged during 1975 and 1976.

In 1977 two classes attempted a Multi Perceptual Organized Class (MUPOC) which included five (5) mothers for each class working each morning of the week. Thus 50 parents were directly involved with these 2 classes each week. The MUPOC concept was provocative and stimulated much discussion amongst parents, teachers and visitors. Irrespective of the success or failure of the MUPOC scheme, it seemed to break the PSA barrier for most teachers.

During 1978 the school averaged 70+ Parent Support Aides for each week and these were employed:

- a) On classwork with 3 kindergarten classes.
- b) On 2 grade craft periods.
- c) On a programme entitled "Precision Teaching-Mathematics".
- d) On a programme adapted from the Tate Language Scheme.
- e) In the library.
- f) On the school's Personal Development Course led by the Health Commission sisters.

No teacher has ever been requested to have PSAs in their room. This year seems to have resulted in a complete lack of inhibition by teachers to use PSAs and the planning is to include PSAs in 18 different programmes. It would be realistic to expect an average of 8 PSAs for each group, ie. 144+ for the whole school.

Parent Support Aides are planned to be used in the following programmes in 1979:

- a) 3 kinder classes — Reading, Triad number activities, gross motor skills, creative activities, physical education, craft.
- b) 6 other infants classes — Various reading and craft activities.
- c) Year 4 — Craft activities.
Year 5 — Craft activities.
Year 6 — Craft activities.
- d) Mathematics Research Programme.
- e) Tate Language Programme (as adapted).
- f) Personal Development Course (once each month).
- g) One junior primary class — MUPOC 1 day per week.
- h) Library — General help.
- i) Sport — PSA assistance.

Each particular operation has specific aims and objectives and part of the organization is aimed at promoting teacher/PSA dialogue regularly. As the programme enlarges, the logistics of providing simple things like morning tea pose greater problems.

Success Factors

Outcomes from previous programmes:

- i) There is a tremendous surge of interest by parents in the conduct of the school and the classroom.
- ii) Parent Support Aides become most sympathetic for the classroom teacher. They realise that a group of 5 can be too large to effectively teach some of the members.
- iii) The PSAs realise the dilemma most teachers feel, and we have had no instance where "They want to take over the place".
- iv) The fact that the PSAs are coming back year after year would seem to indicate that they gain "professional" satisfaction from their work.
- v) It is a continuing delight to talk education with parents at a serious and informed level.

PARENT/TEACHER WORKING PARTY

School: Ryde East Public School
Address: Twin Road, East Ryde 2113
Contact Person: Lee Owens (Parent), 692 1122

Over a period of years during which my children were pupils at Ryde East Public School I became increasingly dissatisfied with the amount of information on the academic and social progress of my children that was formally reported home by the school. It seemed to me that there wasn't enough information reported at any one time, nor was it done often enough, nor was the Progress Report itself organized in a particularly informative way. It was clear to me from personal contacts that the competence of the Principal and staff was not in question, indeed far from it, but simply that some habits in the communicating of results had gone unreviewed for several years because of the press of other urgent school business. I finally said so at a P & C meeting in the middle of Term 1, 1978, putting it simply in terms of my dissatisfaction with the infrequency of reports (twice yearly, June and November). The Principal, Mr. Joe Davis, immediately invited me to speak to a Staff Meeting on the matter. On doing so I discovered that the staff, too, felt the need for some changes, and in fact wished to take it further than I had envisioned by bringing up the matter of the Report Form itself and by requesting additional scheduled teacher-parent interview time during the year. Plainly, we had opened up an area of mutual concern, and had done so with the good will and shared caring of all people involved.

A Working Party was established consisting of four teachers, four parents, and the Principal. The teachers volunteered at that same Staff Meeting; the parents were selected at the next P & C meeting when I reported back. The Working Party held a series of weekday lunchtime meetings at the school, hosted cordially by the Principal. With the customary mid-year report drawing closer, the first matter to be resolved was the devising of a new Report Form. The main features of the revised Report Form were the use of specifically designated numerical marks for seven major subjects, and an "Effort Rating" only (A to E) for an additional five subjects. This was supplemented by a graph showing the average marks for an entire grade in the major subjects, on which was placed a graph of the individual pupil's marks to enable a general subject-by-subject comparison to be made. One graph was issued for each grade, 3 through 6. Much discussion went into the selection of items of "General Behaviour and Attitudes" for comment by teachers. A set of ten items was selected for the mid-year report. This was subsequently reduced to seven, following feedback from parents after the first use (mid-year) of the Report Form (eg: cooperation; does homework conscientiously; takes pride in work well done).

Looking back on these events nearly a year later, I believe that the Working Party acted wisely in choosing an initial task that was immediately practical, had a tangible outcome, and could be discussed with a high prospect of success. It was with some self-satisfaction that we turned our energy to two further tasks – parent-teacher interviews and the preparation of an "Individual Student Profile" form on which a teacher could record personal information about a child in journal/diary fashion.

We all felt the need for a major contact point between teachers and parents during Term 1 of the school year. The teachers asserted, though, that it was too early to assess progress by recording test results in a formal fashion. It was decided to inaugurate in 1979 a series of parent-teacher interviews after about six weeks had elapsed in Term 1, with first priority going to the most obvious cases of a pupil in difficulty, academic or personal. If a parent takes advantage of these interviews, then clear information can be presented about the success or otherwise of a pupil's work in response to the teacher's expectations. More important than this, however, is the early realization by both parent and teacher of exactly what s/he can do to become a partner in the child's schooling, eg, what understandings/misunderstandings exist about the child's attitudes to learning and what both partners (teacher and parent) can do to work on these, what needs close attention and supervision in the child's homework, what

special circumstances at home are playing a part in behaviour at school. At the time of writing, these interviews have yet to occur, and so I cannot write of the response to them.

The final task taken up by the Working Party was the preparation of a document on which could be recorded a variety of information about a child as s/he moved from Grade 3 to Grade 6. The standard Record Card issued by the Department of Education for this purpose was deemed to be too limited both in the sort of information called for and the space allowed for comment. One of the teachers presented for discussion and reconstruction a draft form called the "Individual Student Profile", derived from a Departmental publication called *Evaluation of the Primary School Child*. Through a series of meetings we argued, proposed, and counter-proposed items and categories for the Profile. The final draft is four pages in length, with four major sections: Subject Application, Centres of Interest, General Behaviour and Attitudes, and Personality Growth. Since this Profile will be a cumulative record of a child's life at school, passing from teacher to teacher through the Grades, it will be successful only if it has been devised in a practical enough fashion for teachers to use comfortably. Only time will tell. The intention in the Working Party was that the first major use of this document would occur in the gathering and communicating of information at the parent-teacher interviews in Term 1, 1979.

The Working Party was robust enough to continue through a very trying period at Ryde East Public School. The veteran founding Principal (18 years) retired and was replaced by the Deputy Principal. Two months later the Deputy Principal retired and was replaced by the Senior Teacher as Acting Principal. Through all of these changes the Working Party met and made decisions. I believe that this perseverance was due to a common need felt by both parents and teachers, articulated in such a way as to give dignity to all participants. It became a "win-win" situation (no matter what we did, both sides would benefit, or perhaps rather that the children would benefit) rather than a "win-lose" situation (if one side benefits, then the other side suffers). Certainly the keenness with which the original Principal promoted the idea, and his hospitality during the lunchtime sessions, set the Working Party in motion in a happy frame of mind. As the teachers realized that the parents were not out to criticize individual persons for the way classes were conducted, they contributed professional knowledge aptly and fully. As the parents realized that the teachers were sensitively concerned with the welfare and progress of their children, they became less sceptical of the prospects for success. We begin 1979 with our fourth Principal in seven months. If the proposals of the Working Party come to lasting fruition, there is hope indeed for school based decision sharing.

PROGRAMMES FOR PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

School: Berkeley Public School
Address: George Street, Berkeley 2506
Contact Person: Maureen Reeson (Infants' Mistress), [042] 71 1171

Berkeley, situated on Lake Illawarra, is a suburb of Wollongong. The school has 272 pupils and is classified as "Disadvantaged". The parents of 35% of the children comprise 13 nationalities. Three projects were developed in 1979 to facilitate interaction between the school and its community.

Project 1: Weekly classes of 1½ hours to teach basic English.

Project 2: Weekly classes of 1½ hours to teach Italian to English-speaking people.

Project 3: Effective parenting programme. Contact person: Roger Delbridge.

Project 1: English Classes For Migrant Parents

The aim is for the parents to develop the ability to communicate in English in daily life and to gain the confidence to become involved in community and school activities.

A Multicultural Committee, consisting of five teachers, was formed in November 1978 at the instigation of the Principal. One of the aims was to involve parents from other countries in activities which would display their cultures. A problem which arose was the reluctance of some mothers to participate because of lack of ability and confidence in speaking English. To overcome this it was proposed that classes be held on a weekly basis. Through the Disadvantaged Schools Programme a remedial language teacher was already employed and she agreed to implement a course of six lessons. The course has been extended and will continue for the remainder of the year.

To gain support for the project letters, translated into several languages by the Commonwealth Bank were sent to parents. The course was advertised at P & C meetings, Mother's Club meetings, in the school magazine and personal contact was made with parents who accompanied their children to school.

Themes, which are used to teach basic vocabulary and structure, are centred around aspects of daily life, eg: the home, school, health and shopping. Stencils are prepared by the teacher and resources, available in the school, are used. The emphasis has been on oral rather than written language as some mothers have had little schooling.

The support provided by the teacher and the interest of the participants have been the motivating forces leading to the success of the programme.

Project 2: Italian Classes for English Speakers

The aim is to provide the opportunity for English-speaking members of the community to learn a second language.

This project was an outcome of the first. The proposed English lessons were being discussed at a Mother's Club meeting and a number of members expressed the desire to learn a second language. Some members wished to be able to speak to neighbours and others wished to be involved in a learning experience. Italian was the language which the majority desired to learn. The President of the Mother's Club, an Australian mother who had studied Italian, an Italian mother and the Infants' Mistress were involved in implementing the programme.

In order to support the mothers it was essential to keep costs to a minimum and to provide them with a convenient meeting place. A spare classroom fulfilled the latter requirement. Inquiries were made about the cost of two commercial courses but they were too expensive. Telephone contact was made with the Department of Sports and Recreation and the Ethnic Affairs Department and both referred the school to the WEA which holds courses in Italian in Wollongong. It was decided that the school would organise its own course. Each intending participant agreed to purchase a copy of the book *Italian Made Simple* by Jackson and Lopreato. An Australian mother and an Italian mother agreed to work together as teachers.

The former to read the English instructions and explain the grammar and the latter, whose dialect was suitable, to provide the model for pronunciation. One chapter of the book was studied each week and a dictation passage given.

The course was announced at P & C meetings and Mother's Club meetings. Availability, convenience, cost and the desire to learn have been the factors contributing to the success of this project.

The fact that there are a number of adults, other than parents, enrolled in the course indicates that the projects are well received in the community.

Project 3: A Course In Systematic Training For Effective Parenting

The STEP course is designed to offer parents a range of ideas to discuss, evaluate and possibly to incorporate effective methods of child management. The emphasis is on the changing structure of society necessitating a subsequent change in child management which is appropriate to the present structure, rather than using child rearing methods that worked for and applied to society several decades ago.

The course was offered on Monday afternoons for an hour and a half per session. The course went over four weeks and was held in the school library.

Advertising for this course was circulated through the school children to their parents in the form of a letter.

The School Counsellors, Roger Delbridge and Don Gordon, using the full cooperation of the Principal, staff and P & C organization, arranged the letters, formed the groups and were the group leaders in the project.

The groups were comprised of parents who indicated interest.

Group sessions were run on a very informal basis, running along the lines of a discussion about a series of ideas put forward by the Counsellor. There was plenty of opportunity for discussion and all members took full advantage.

The focus of the programme centres on:

- a) More effective ways of coping with children by offering a wider range of alternatives for consideration by parents.
- b) The encouragement of communication between parents in the group with an eye to the development of support for each other through sharing and friendship.

After evaluating the STEP programme and seeing its potential for school-community relationships and total child development, the principals of the Berkeley District had purchased the kit on a collective basis.

There were only minimal problems encountered and the full attendances throughout the course indicated the enthusiasm of the group members.

Success Factors

Factors leading to the success of the programme include:

- an opportunity for parents to share experiences without blame or fault finding;
- the development of group support for individuals experiencing difficulties;
- the development of new friendships by affording an opportunity for parents to meet and talk;
- a relaxed environment free of distractions based at the school where people could stop and evaluate how they thought they operated as parents and how they might change or improve;
- the very positive input by the school to the community which has strengthened the communication between parents and school.

SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL

School: Bidwill High School
Address: Bottles Road, Plumpton 2761
Contact Person: Ms L Harris (School Council Secretary), 625 5444

Bidwill High School is a new school whose pupils live in the latest of the Mt Druitt Housing Commission areas. The school is presently housed in demountable buildings at Plumpton pending completion of its new buildings at Bidwill.

This project has been developed to improve formal communication between all groups affected by school policies: teaching, ancillary and cleaning staffs, parents and students.

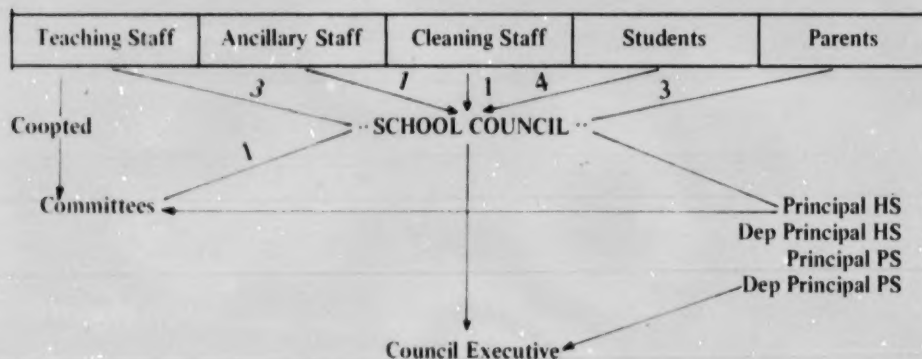
The project takes the form of establishment of a School Council.

Aims and Structure

The aims of the Council are twofold:

- 1 To provide a forum for those groups who have an interest in the school's policies and organisation and to advise the school with respect to:
 - a general curriculum;
 - b general organisation;
 - c social conditions;
 - d care and use of physical facilities;
 - e student welfare
 - f general aspects of staff/student, student/student and school/community relations.
- 2 To provide experience in meeting procedure for students and others not versed in these procedures.

The structure of the Council, as presently constituted is most easily shown as follows:



All councillors are elected by their constituent group. Meetings are held as and when required and are open to observers. Sub-committees are formed for specific purposes and include at least one elected councillor and coopted members, eg social committee, disadvantaged funds committee etc. Minutes and books of accounts are kept. The number of representatives of each group is decided by the Council when appropriate.

Initiation and Implementation

Background

Bidwill High School is separated from its feeder community by about 3 km, while the new school is being built. Public transport between the school and its community is inadequate

and because of the nature of the community the availability of private transport at times appropriate to school-community liaison is difficult.

Added to this was the initial reluctance of the community to become involved in school activities, a reluctance which seemed to arise partly from their own feelings of inadequacy due to lack of experience in school matters.

The first attempts at formal involvement of parents began in March 1977 when a well advertised meeting to form a P & C was held. This meeting was attended by two people, the Principal and Deputy-principal.

After this discouraging start, various methods of **informing** rather than involving parents were undertaken, including monthly news bulletins which included articles on school attitudes and reasons for, as well as news of, school activities. Printed surveys of parent opinion were made on such things as report formats, interschool visits etc, and other activities involving students were organised, some of which involved parents in various ways – parent-teacher nights, enrolment days etc.

Gradually liaison improved and involvement increased.

Also, during 1977, within the school, good cooperation had developed between all members of the staff, with all staff being consulted on policies and procedures which affected their work in the school.

Formation

At the beginning of 1978, the Principal put forward to parents, staff and students various ways in which formal school-community relations might be established. One of these was the School Council structure outlined previously.

With the support of the constituent groups the Council was formed in May 1978.

Process

It should be stressed that the project is in the experimental stage and though it has functioned effectively to date, estimates of its success will have to await the test of time.

Measures taken to date to keep the council operating include:

- a council reports in each of the school's monthly bulletins;
- b advertising of parents' representatives names and addresses in school bulletins;
- c involvement of student and parent representatives, including councillors, in sub-committees;
- d Council-sponsored activities such as socials, parent-teacher nights, general meetings of parents etc;
- e reports of Council activities in local papers;
- f Council approaches to local government bodies and Education Department on various matters affecting the school and school-community facilities.

Generally it is felt that the key to its continued operation is the recognition that it is an effective group, has legitimate, wide-ranging and worthwhile responsibilities and that its views are respected. The growth of the school and increasing variety of functions should enable more people to become involved and the range of Council activities to increase.

Success Factors

Various factors can be identified as contributing to the degree of success so far recognised:

- a The support of the Principal, Deputy-principal and staff for the principle that those affected by a decision should have a say in formulating that decision.
- b The willingness of all categories of staff to be a part of the team contributing to improvements in school-community relations.
- c The interest of sufficient numbers of parents in contributing to school policy and activities.
- d The willingness of a number of students not only to put forward views, but also to work in support of the Council-sponsored activities decided on.

SCHOOL BASED DECISION SHARING

School: Newling Public School
Address: 80 Chappel Street, Armidale 2350
Contact Person: Trevor Cook, [067] 72 1488

To consider school based decision making in Newling Public School, it is first necessary to look at the history and ethos of the school. In the five years since its inception, Newling has been a controversial school. Much of this controversy has centred about the decision making process in the school, and with its relations with the community. School based decision sharing projects in the school included policy sharing and the development of a Policy Coordinating Committee; staff involvement in democratic decision sharing; parent and community involvement programs; a students' council; the use of resource personnel in techniques of decision making; and parental choice in teaching style and classroom approaches. Participative democracy was central to the policy of the school.

Background

Newling was opened in 1974. The Principal had a progressive philosophy and established Newling as an open school. The building itself was conducive to an open plan approach, with wet areas established and flexible spaces which could be partitioned into rooms or opened for the establishment of larger spaces. The school opened with junior grades, not reaching its full enrolment until 1977. The school was developed as an open school until the Principal left for another position at the end of 1978. During these five years, the school developed an ethos of open, progressive education, community involvement, school based decision sharing and curriculum development, as well as other innovations.

The school was controversial. The Principal was dedicated to his open philosophy, speaking openly to community groups about the philosophy of the school. To appreciate the situation fully, it is necessary to consider the following conditions under which the school was established:

- the school catered for a basically working class population;
- the Principal decided upon an open school and an open policy;
- Armidale is zoned for public schools and parents had no choice in selecting schools;
- the school, with its open philosophy, could not draw upon families who supported open education, apart from those in the Newling zone;
- teachers were allocated to the school irrespective of their educational philosophy.

There are some other considerations. The school was not fully carpeted until 1978. Carpet is a significant, although perhaps not essential factor, in establishing an environment in which there is considerably more general movement and activities which demand children to be mobile. The addition of carpet added a 'warmer', quieter environment.

School Policy

The policy was developed in the first months of the school and was open and progressive in all regards. The Principal was open with the community and the school's policy was much discussed at early P&C and staff meetings. The policy was child centred. Children were to work at their own rates and could move freely about the room and school. There would be no streaming or grouping and the teacher was to be seen as a facilitator. Team teaching was encouraged, and integrated, interdisciplinary approaches developed. The school was open to parents and visitors alike.

The architect of the policy was the Principal; he was the catalyst for change. However, even though the staff had no choice in their placement in the school, during the first year there was much support and collaboration by the staff in decisions concerning the curriculum, school organisation, refinement of policy and other aspects of organisation. The community too were immensely proud that their community had a new school, and supported the new policy.

Although the initial decision to develop an open school was the Principal's, there was involvement in decision making by both parents and teachers to a considerable degree. Basic policy statements concerning the autonomy of the child meant there was considerable emphasis on decision making by the child, as well.

However, even in the first year, problems began to emerge. There was great initial success in terms of developing a philosophical ethos and the community and the staff responded positively. The initial problems emerged at the practical level in the classrooms. Curriculum learning centres had been established. There were home classes but the children rotated during the day through different subject areas. Pupil profiles were kept and teaching programmes were jointly planned by the staff. This program had to be abandoned, however, shortly after its introduction. Home classes were implemented and team teaching was introduced.

The first six months of the new school was spent in an existing school whilst Newling was being completed. The innovations which have just been described took place once the school was established in its new premises and over the next year. There had been considerable physical disturbances and the new school was still being finished. The children found difficulty adapting to the subject areas approach and the situation was stressful for the teachers. The Principal and Deputy diagnosed the problem and after consulting with teachers, abandoned this approach.

During 1975, various other approaches were tried in terms of classroom procedures and organisation with much emphasis on team teaching and programming. Teachers met after school, at night and at weekends; the school based and teacher based decision making was obviously stimulating much motivation on the part of the staff. However, teachers and parents were becoming concerned with some aspects of the school. It was obvious that the changes had caused stress for both.

At the end of 1975 a special meeting was held at which all members of the community were invited and it was announced that for the following year, in response to parent pressure, two class type options would be offered: open plan (OP) and teacher directed (TD). It must be pointed out that this decision was against the wishes of the Principal and in response to the demands of the community.

During 1976, TD and OP classes operated, children being able to allocate which they preferred. Team teaching also continued but there was now some turnover of staff and the old ethos appeared to fade in the face of uncertainty, new faces on the staff, and a more pragmatic approach.

Some members of staff were now obviously worried by their philosophical approaches and contradictions they perceived in their practice. Even those thoroughly supportive were faced with a dilemma: a desire to support the Principal and the philosophy of the school in practice; and their own belief systems about the nature of society, the child, and their individual philosophies. This dilemma was causing considerable stress, not only for some teachers, but for parents. Some parents believed the school was not catering for the needs of their children as they perceived them, even with TD classes.

The problem was a basic one: lack of choice. Although decision making was participative, the process had not been able to cater for the needs of the community without a support structure — the capacity on the part of parents to opt out, to send their child to a different school if desired. Some felt the school was being forced on them.

Equally, with some teachers, they found they were in conflict; they wanted to support the philosophy of the school, but didn't believe in it. Another support structure, teacher choice, would have alleviated this problem. Neither were available.

In a real sense, the school was not able to offer its community a prospectus, and to allow choice. Although open in philosophy, it had to force, in part, its philosophy on both parents, and to some extent, teachers. Flexibility is the keyword; flexibility by the system to accommodate the school, the parents and the teachers. The support structures were missing, although the processes such as community involvement and participative decision making were there. A real conflict developed between the school and the community, which caused much stress for the Principal, teachers and the community. Support, however, was still forthcoming from

the community and teachers, and open negotiations continued between the school and the community.

It must be mentioned at this stage, that considerable stress was placed on teachers because of a lack of definition concerning their roles. It also became clear that the aims and objectives were not clear to the staff; they were not sure where they were going or why. A Nominal Group Technique (NGT) approach was introduced in late 1977, to ascertain the ten most pressing needs of the school, as perceived by the staff. The procedure can be done quickly in one staff meeting. Essentially, it consists of a procedure emphasising the equal opinion of each member of staff. There is no open debate and the staff is asked to respond to a given question, in this case regarding the needs of the school, by writing choices on cards. A neutral person administers the procedure. Options are written up and their frequency of occurrence noted, the identities of the teachers' individual statements being kept secret. Finally, a ten point priority list is drawn up. The importance of the procedure is that it effectively counteracts the persuasive or dominant speakers, allowing an 'average' response to emerge. This is a valuable procedure because it allows the 'feeling' of the staff to be tapped.

The NGT at Newling showed that lack of clear and precisely understood aims and objectives on the part of the staff was the most pressing need of the staff. It is also worth noting that in response to a similar question, the staff, after consensus and discussion, previously rated the needs very differently. Some members of the staff at least were unclear of the aims and objectives of the school. The more persuasive and dominant speakers were masking this need on the part of the staff. This shows the need to tap the personal opinions and feelings of each staff member.

The Principal was clearly disturbed at the results and took action to clarify aims and objectives for the school. However, this was some four years after the school commenced. This episode highlights the need for clear aims and objectives. Although the Newling Policy was a sizeable document, and aims and objectives are implicit in it, nowhere are they explicitly stated.

Programs and Procedures

All programs developed in the school in the early stages, had the following characteristics:

- programs were child centred;
- emphasis was placed on the autonomy of the teacher in decision making;
- parental involvement was supported and encouraged;
- participant democracy was established in matters of staff decisions;
- policy matters were discussed by a representative parent body, the Policy Coordinating Committee;
- ability grouping and peer group competition was de-emphasised in all areas of the curriculum including sport.

Programs will be described individually so that a fuller appreciation of structures and processes can be gained.

Participative Decision Making

The process of participative decision making has been fundamental to the school since its inception. Staff meetings were run democratically with members of staff sharing chairperson duties and with all decisions being taken by staff vote, but with the Principal maintaining right of veto. Auxiliary staff and cleaners were invited to meetings and could vote where decisions were to be made concerning their areas of responsibility. One member of staff acted as secretary and Staff Meeting Notes were printed and distributed to members of staff.

Certainly, staff meetings were very open affairs at which points of view were put and much debate and discussion occurred. The role of the Principal in this process caused some discussion amongst the staff. To be truly democratic, he could be outvoted and his decisions overruled. He would then abrogate his responsibility to the Department of Education as a Departmental officer. To use his power of veto as a Departmental officer resulted in pseudo-democracy. This caused much discussion and concern but does point to the amount of interest being generated amongst the staff regarding the issue.

It also raised the issue of the fundamental purpose or purposes of democratic decision making. It can obviously operate in the absolute sense where the staff and community act as the body politic and give a mandate to the executive. On the other hand, where a principal is held responsible and accountable by a higher body, in this case the NSW Department of Education, democratic decision making, with principal power of veto, can be seen as a motivational process whereby staff participate, thereby playing a role in the decisions being made about their situation, and thus becoming more motivated and committed to them.

Certainly the structure of participative democracy is important in both senses: as a human right, if it is to be seen in that perspective; and as a motivational procedure, where the process involves the teacher in at least his or her say in how things should be.

Community Involvement

Especially in the earlier stages of the school, the community was involved in all levels of decision making, with the exception of decisions concerning classroom procedure. However, with the introduction of OP/TD classes as a response to parental pressure, it must be argued that the community in effect were influencing decisions here as well.

Parents and community members were free to wander through the school at any time during school hours, in the early stages of the school. However, with some adverse publicity it was felt that the right had been partly abused. Also, it was considered that the process caused disruption to classroom procedures and was unsettling for both teachers and pupils. Later, visitors were shown through upon request. Parents always came freely to the school and were actively involved in school affairs.

Curriculum nights were held for parents at which staff members explained the curriculum and teaching procedures. Questions and discussions followed.

The Parents and Citizens' Association also played a fundamental role in community involvement. Numerous committees were set up and all staff decisions were ratified by the P&C. However, although the structure was set up the process often failed. The structure was clearly for community involvement and participative decision making, the process foundered because of differences between the community's commitment to the open philosophy and the Principal's. The body politic had not been part of the initial decision making. Perhaps it is more correct to say the initial decisions were taken too quickly, before an informed populace had been established. Obviously, good democratic decision making depends on an informed populace, aware of its needs, and aware of the nature of the changes to be implemented and the rationale behind them. It is debatable that this was the case in Newling. The community initially did support the scheme but later grew alienated, perhaps because of a lack of commitment to the ideal, which in turn may have been due to their not being fully cognizant of the reasons for changes, or to a feeling that they had not really had a choice.

The important point is that commitment is essential, and commitment to the philosophy and ideal, in a program such as Newling. No one doubts the teachers' commitment to their own philosophies, or the parents' commitment to theirs, but it is a moot point that one can be committed to an ideal or philosophy one does not understand or believe in. Choice is essential. Choice and commitment are concomitant, it would seem, in situations such as Newling, where a new philosophy and methodology is being espoused and introduced.

However, when the community did play its role regarding the OP/TD decision, one-third opted for OP. This was two years after the introduction of open plan. Had the movement towards open plan been more slowly introduced, and had the community played a more fundamental role in it, a different situation may have resulted.

Teacher Decision Making

Teacher autonomy was stressed in the Policy. Given the mandate teachers had in terms of the Policy and philosophy of education of the school, teachers received a much greater degree of autonomy in the classroom. Programming and assessment was left essentially to the teacher. Supervision was seen as a consultative process. Team teaching and programming developed.

Because of the range of teaching styles held by the teachers, a variety of classroom approaches developed, including basically traditional classrooms, conventional classrooms and open classrooms. These generally fitted within the OP/TD structure.

An evaluation cycle was introduced. Curriculum evaluation teams in subject areas were established and the teams were released from classroom duties for periods to visit other teachers' rooms and discuss programs and developments in the respective subjects. This process did cause some anxiety for teachers but was generally a congenial process. Reports were written upon completion of the cycles and copies distributed to staff members. Constructive suggestions rather than criticism was emphasised.

Although there was some doubt concerning the usefulness of such a process, because of its consultative nature, it did lead to teachers visiting and seeing other teachers teach; and to dialogue between teachers concerning aspects of individual teaching and programming usually relegated to teacher-supervisor or teacher-inspector dialogue.

The Policy Coordinating Committee

The Policy Coordinating Committee consisted of five parent members elected by the P&C, two staff elected teachers, and the Principal. The Committee's duties included policy development, including modifications and suggesting initiatives; parent-teacher programs to increase understanding and community involvement; development of the school as a focal point for the community; coordination of activities of other committees; reports to plenary sessions of the P&C; to act on matters raised at plenary P&C meetings; and the development of community involvement programs for minority groups in the community.

Suggestions for modification of policy by the Policy Coordinating Committee were referred to the staff for final ratification. There was a dialogue therefore between the Policy Coordinating Committee representing the P&C and the staff, and the P&C and the staff. Policy suggestions from the staff were presented to the Policy Coordinating Committee for discussion and suggested modification.

Perhaps the major success of the Policy Coordinating Committee was that it acted as a buffer between the community and the school at a time when there was some dissention. Being a small committee of parents and teachers, the real issues were able to emerge and the feeling of the community was able to be tapped. The Principal, however, was in an invidious position with the staff on one side and the parents on the other, each with vested interests which might contradict his own desires and philosophy. It did operate in this capacity and although it never reached its potential, it did show the possibility such a structure had.

Some Considerations

Perhaps the major problem which Newling faced was the lack of flexibility of the Departmental structure it found itself in. Essentials for success were missing. The following support structures are necessary for a school such as Newling to be a viable entity:

- flexible zoning allowing a degree of parent choice;
- staffing flexibility allowing teacher choice, at least to some degree;
- clear and precise aims and objectives which reflect the needs of the community;
- the inclusion of the parent body in the initial decision making process.

To a certain extent, Newling approximated all of these ideals. Some staff members elected to come to Newling. Zoning is now more flexible. Clearer and more precise aims and objectives were being implemented. However, the single thing which is outstanding in Newling's history is the anxiety and uncertainty caused through unclear and imprecise aims and objectives; a feeling of where the school was going and why on the part of the community and the staff. Yet in five years, many alternative structures were implemented and explored, and structures within the school became very much more flexible.

The New School

In 1979, the school has a new Principal. He is in the unique position of having been a spectator, not directly involved during these formative years. At the conclusion of the first staff meeting, he made specific comment about the openness of discussion between the staff. Perhaps the greatest effect Newling has had, has been in the freeing from stricture of the staff's and the community's thoughts and feelings on education. Progress may have been forced and a little too rapid; support structures were missing and where they were implemented, short in procedural refinement. However, that such structures are needed and such processes, which bring about successful development, are worth seeking, is undeniable. Therein lies the challenge.

Conclusion

There are four basic questions which have been asked concerning school based decision making:

- What decisions are best made at the school level?
- Who should be involved in various school based decisions?
- What are the implications?
- What are the best ways to go about school based decision sharing?

These questions must be considered if school based decision making is to become a viable approach. From the Newling experience, the following points can be made, in reference to this specific case, regarding these four questions.

Firstly, it would seem that decisions are best made at the school level, when the issues have to do directly with the particular school, its parents, pupils, teachers and community. This is a broad statement but it basically means this: decisions concerning the micro unit of society — the school community, rather than the macro unit, society. Certainly, there are macro considerations which reflect the whole of society and affect the whole society. The issue of compulsory education, for example, is a macro decision, made as a response to the body politic that all children should attend school, or receive an education. The State also determines that guidelines be established concerning curricula. These are macro issues; micro issues deal with specific communities.

The state education departments have traditionally seen the Centre as being the decision making body, perhaps on the assumption that all the micro units of society reflect the macro unit — that all communities are alike. This, of course, is not the case, the move towards cultural pluralism is evidence of acceptance of this proposition. There has been a movement in recent years from the Centre to the periphery in decision making in acknowledgement of this. Meaningful decisions concerning a community regarding its needs, educational or otherwise, cannot be made without that community being involved in the fundamental process of decision making. This is a great challenge for schools, and they have been, perhaps, ill-prepared for it. Decisions are best made by those who will be affected by them in consultation with those who will implement them.

This leads directly to the question of who should be involved in school based decision making. Again, those who are involved in the decisions: the teachers and the parents who represent their children. The person who implements the decision has a key role as does the person who represents the recipient of the decision, the parent. The person held accountable must also be considered, should he or she be higher in the hierarchy, but too often this person has been the decision maker and the decisions have been handed down with the implementer and the recipient playing no role in the process.

What are the implications? Obviously, the major implication lies in accountability and responsibility. As a decision maker one is responsible for those decisions. There is no one to blame. The rewards however, are great, both in terms of motivation and commitment.

What are the best ways to go about school based decision sharing? This is a difficult question yet perhaps the central one. Certainly, with as much awareness of the implications as possible. It is a slow process whereby haste cannot only bring about failure in specific programs, but put the whole movement back. Care and awareness of reactions and the possible outcomes are essential. Consultation and negotiation between parties are essential. However, the necessity for clear and concise goals is important and should be central to the initial process. From

Newling's experience, little more can be said.

It is hoped that this description will assist those who seek to increase and refine school based decision making. It is not an easy process, but one that is essential in an increasingly pluralistic and complex society. Though no solutions have been offered, it is hoped some problem areas have been identified which may assist those involved in school based decision sharing.

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY CENTRE

School: Marrickville Public School
Address: 96 Illawarra Road, Marrickville 2204
Contact Persons: Bevan Wilson (Principal)
Russell Gorrie (Co-ordinator), 560 2208

The school is a large inner-city primary school classified as "Disadvantaged". There are 1 100 students, 60% of whom are Greek, 18% Australian and the remaining 22% comprise 24 other nationalities. One major project developed to facilitate interaction between the school and its community is the establishment this year of a School and Community Centre within the school.

The Centre is designed to provide a comfortable and friendly meeting place for the parents in the school, which will meet some of their social needs and in which a number of parent-requested courses can be provided. The Centre has two complimentary aims, that of increasing parent awareness, competence and confidence so that they are more able to become part of the school programme, and that of increasing the awareness in teachers of community needs and resources. The long term aim is that this interaction of school and community will have an effect on the curriculum of the school by making it more relevant and meaningful to the children and will thus improve what is done in the classroom.

Initiation

The idea for a "Parent Centre" was mooted at a Staff Development weekend mid 1977 in a discussion on community-school relations. It was later endorsed by the whole staff. At a second Staff Development weekend it was pointed out that such a Centre could not operate without personnel and that if it was to come about an action strategy was needed, or as one teacher said, "Let's stop talking about it and **do** something!". The participants at the course then nominated a committee to draw up a plan of action. This plan was later acted on with the Principal's and staff concurrence.

Three teachers were elected by the staff, one from each department in the school. Other staff volunteered to cover their classes so that they could spend four days researching the proposal and drawing up a submission. The teachers visited three schools which had community involvement programmes. They talked to people at the local Information Centre, Health Centre, Youth and Community Services office, Greek Welfare Centre and the Inner City Education Centre. Four days later a draft submission was presented to a school staff meeting. The proposal involved using a classroom teacher to act full-time as Co-ordinator of the Centre, together with a multilingual teacher's aide already employed at the school. So it required funding for a casual teacher to replace the classroom teacher. This proposal was endorsed and the meeting voted overwhelmingly that it be the number one priority on the Disadvantaged Schools' submission.

The drawing up of the proposal was therefore a good example of shared decision making. It involved the Principal, executive staff, classroom teachers, ethnic aides, community members and other resource people.

Implementation

The submission was successful and the centre now occupies a carpeted double room in one of the older blocks in the school. By the provision of a relief teacher, a teacher from the staff was able to be released on a full-time basis to coordinate the activities of the Centre. An ethnic aide who speaks Greek and Arabic assists on a part-time basis. The Centre is a whole school activity and many of the teachers contribute to the Centre's programmes by running courses or staging student exhibitions and performances for the parents. Past, present and future activities of the Centre include:

- Pottery.
- English lessons.

- Greek lessons.
- Playgroup for preschoolers.
- Weight Watchers.
- Women's Fitness Group.
- Table tennis.
- Typing.
- Relaxation therapy.
- Clothes making lessons.
- After-school activities for children.
- Demonstration lessons.
- Parent education classes (eg New Maths).
- Buses for parents to visit the school camps.
- Films (eg 'Caddie', 'Picnic at Hanging Rock').
- Talks on Megibank, taxation, first aid, etc.
- Excursions for parents (eg Nielson Park, Dural).
- Home visits by teachers.
- Factory visits by classes.
- Translations and interpreting.
- Referrals to community agencies.
- International nights.
- Council's information bus visiting the school.
- Hobbytex, Tupperware, jewellery, fashion and plant parties.
- A weekly parent newsletter.
- A reading programme involving parents.
- P & C meetings in Greek and English.
- Notices to parents in English, Greek and Arabic.
- Signs in the school in three languages.
- Employment of ethnic aides.
- Ethnic books in the library.
- Weekly parent/teacher barbecue.
- Adult literacy programme.
- Saturday barbecues and open discussions.
- Parent/teacher nights.
- Class days with the parents in the Centre.
- Monthly open mornings.
- Monthly morning teas for parents.
- Ethnic dancing.
- Parents selecting children's work for school magazine.
- Parents invited on excursions.
- Parents assisting with submissions.
- Liaison with community agencies -- eg: Health Centre; Information Centre; Community Centre; Rotary Club; Salvation Army; local papers; ethnic organisations, etc.
- Courses in the school run by: TAFE (Outreach); Adult Migrant Education; Youth and Community Services.
- Liaison with local high schools (teachers, parents and students).
- Participation in Senior Citizens' Week.
- Children assisting with Meals on Wheels.
- Ex-students reunion at the school.
- Etc, etc, etc.

The Centre itself is open during the following hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday	8.30 to 5.30 pm
Wednesday	8.30 to 9.15 pm

Many of the children attend Greek School (held in the classrooms) from 3.45 pm to 5.30 pm so the parents, who come to pick up their children after Greek School, use the Centre. As well,

many parents call in during the day for a talk, cup of coffee, advice or assistance, to buy school uniforms, inquire about activities, meet their child's teacher or to hold their meetings, etc.

The school provides activities and toys for preschool-age children while their parents participate in activities or help in classrooms. As well, many teachers have been involved with parents in the Centre for a variety of activities including fitness, clothes making, reading and New Maths programmes, demonstration lessons, class days, films etc.

Decisions about what the Centre should be doing are made informally by parents who use the Centre. Overall evaluation and suggestions are also made by a weekly teachers' committee meeting with all years from K to 6 represented by at least one staff member. Parents are welcome and some do attend these meetings held every Wednesday at lunchtime. Recently, the school had a Saturday afternoon parent discussion group with over 100 parents and community members attending. They broke into three groups – English, Greek and Arabic speaking and all came together at the end to summarise the findings of the three groups. Discussions ranged from homework, to Federal cutbacks and parents rights versus the school. The teachers present played a minor role.

Many of the parents in the school come from village backgrounds in Mediterranean countries and have had very little schooling themselves. For many of them, the school is seen as a very threatening place and the process of gradually involving them in the school's activities requires a lot of patience and sensitivity. The emphasis on social gatherings and non-academic classes reflects the need to gain their confidence in the first place. For those who become interested in helping in the school's programmes, teachers run special classes to prepare them to be active helpers in the classroom.

Problems

One of the major problems that hampered the Centre in its early life was that the organizers started off at an inappropriate level. It was assumed that many of the parents of the migrant children would want to learn English and it was thought that a good way of getting the parents into the school would be to run English classes at the Centre. The teachers visited homes and explained the set-up – many parents said they would come, but none did. It was at this point that the staff realised that just entering the school was still a very threatening thing for many parents and that they would have to start off at a much more informal and less threatening level. By issuing a general invitation to all parents through the regular school newsletter (in Greek and English) and enlisting the services of some key parents in the school (eg the canteen ladies etc) to recruit others, a small group of parents was gathered and started to meet informally over coffee at the school. Talk about what the centre might do was gradually introduced into these social gatherings (in Greek and English) and the parents started to take a more active interest. At one stage they visited a parents' centre in another school to get ideas, then went on to help in choosing the furniture for the Centre and eventually began to make suggestions on some of the operating procedures. By starting off at an informal, non-academic level, the way was paved to successfully introduce English classes at a later stage when they were asked for by the parents. They are now well attended.

At the beginning of 1979 the school had a significant turnover of staff and unfortunately several key people were lost. It has taken six months for some of the newer staff members to grasp the whole idea and the staff see this as a perennial problem. What is needed is a long-term commitment by teachers to particular schools, instead of moving every two or three years for the sake of experience.

As well, such a large school as Marrickville, with its added difficulty of being located on three separate sites, has communication problems amongst its staff. It's quite possible to go many months without meeting some members of staff. However, many endeavours are made to help overcome these problems, ie combined staff meetings, a weekly staff bulletin, Staff Development weekends, subject committee meetings, Community Centre committee meetings etc.

The Centre itself is located in a part of the school that is not ideal. Somewhat hidden away, its accessibility is limited to the brave, the inquisitive or the familiar (although there are some

advantages in not being in the middle).

The Centre's progress is restricted by the lack of personnel (one coordinator and a part-time ethnic aide). Staff have discovered that a school/community project encompasses many directions and ideas. Indeed the role of the coordinator has turned toward a support person as well as a contact person. The coordinator and staff cannot neglect the use of the community as a resource, school-based curricula, parental access not only to the school but into the classroom, teacher education (the staff, other schools, visitors, etc), parent education, community education, community languages and multicultural education, let alone find time to know the community. A social worker and a coordinator would make a lot more headway.

Even so the school regularly sees more than 100 parents/community members using the Centre every week. This may only be an average of 20 a day, but the school knows its aims involve a very long process of involvement. Overnight miracles cannot be expected.

Success Factors

In analysing the project to isolate the factors which led to its success, a number of characteristics could be mentioned:

- i The Principal provided leadership, support and encouragement in his belief in the value of school based decision sharing.
- ii The open organisation of the school contributed significantly. In addition to the formal staff meetings the primary staff held informal weekly staff meetings. At these meetings the chairperson rotated so that everyone – Principal and first-year out teacher alike – had an equal opportunity to take charge. The agenda consisted of all items which the Principal and staff put forward for discussion.

The school executive meetings were open to all staff to attend, although few took up the opportunity.

Interschool communication was through a regular weekly bulletin to which all staff could contribute.

The student body was represented by a Students' Council. Each primary class elected two representatives and the Council met weekly with the Principal to discuss school issues and put forward suggestions. Councillors were responsible for bringing up issues concerning their class and to report back to them on Council discussions.

Other personnel involved in school programmes included the bilingual/bicultural ethnic aides, employed under the Disadvantaged Schools' Programme. They acted as a communication link between the school and its community.

- iii Teacher initiative.
- iv The Disadvantaged Schools' Programme which allowed the school to make inroads into the traditionally forbidden territory of staffing and funding.
- v Links with local community.

The project has been able to succeed within the present system but only given these fortuitous circumstances.

SCHOOL—COMMUNITY LIBRARY CENTRE

School: Harrington Primary School
Address: High Street, Harrington 2427
Contact Person: Terry Britten (Principal) [065] 56 1267

Harrington is a seaside village (population 1 000) 33 kilometres from the Regional Centre of Taree. Secondary school facilities are located at Taree. The major project undertaken in 1978 was the establishment of a 'Community Library Centre' at the local primary school.

Aims

The aims behind the establishment of the 'Centre' were:

- i to provide specific facilities the community is deprived of because of its isolation and nature;
- ii to raise the literacy and aspiration levels of the community;
- iii to develop community spirit and self-help attitude towards this and other community projects; and
- iv to make fuller use of existing facilities.

Initiation

The idea for the establishment of a library centre came about as a result of two main things. Firstly, parents of secondary pupils sought help from the primary school as bus schedules disadvantaged their children in access to library facilities. Secondly, the results of a survey conducted by the primary school indicated that only 3 ex-pupils of the school in 10 years (approximately 60 pupils) had completed a high school education.

Though there was discussion involving the Principal/staff/and community, as to what features were desired, the responsibility for preparing a submission to attract funds and the later implementing of the scheme fell heavily on the Principal (50% staff turnover 1977/78 broke the continuity of staff participation).

Implementation

With the approval of the submission the library was able to open two nights per week. The school was fortunate in having a large carpeted library equipped with fans and heaters.

Provision was made to equip the library as a 'Reference Centre' for secondary and technical college pupils, and general community use.

Photocopy facilities were provided. A 'Language Master' reading machine was made available to parents interested in helping their children with reading.

Bulk loans of fiction and non fiction books from the Regional Library catered for those seeking normal adult library facilities. The provision of newspapers, chess sets etc. aimed at making for a pleasant, relaxing atmosphere.

Initially, administration and decision making rested with the Principal. Later developments saw the calling of a public meeting at which a Committee was elected to manage all aspects of the Community Library. Variations to the original scheme will now take place to suit the needs of the community as seen by community members.

Problems

The two major problems the school has faced has been to attract people to use the library, and to have the community realise the library was a worthwhile facility and worth maintaining once the initial funding grant was exhausted.

It was not hard to attract the "readers" and the "interested students" to the library. Once they were informed that the facilities existed (notes, advertisements etc.) they appeared on the doorstep and have been there ever since. The problem was, to attract the people who had lost or never developed the reading habit; to get them into the library to see what was available for adults and students.

Advertisements were placed in the local press. Posters displayed in shops, the hotel and club. Visits were arranged for local service clubs and organisations. The 1978 State Elections provided the opportunity to channel all adults in the community through the library as the polling booths were located at the school. Displays and information sheets ensured that virtually every adult in the community was made aware of the facilities.

There has been only a slow increase in library usage by the general public. This was the trend that research had predicted. Reading habits cannot be changed overnight. A point of encouragement is that the greatest "users" are pupils who had experienced and enjoyed library facilities while still in primary school.

Success Factors

It is too early to gauge the success of this venture. The current Committee is optimistic and encouraged by the way the community has come forward with donations to fund the next 12 months operations. The "need" for the centre has achieved community recognition.

At this stage the programme is in its infancy as far as potential and community involvement. Already the need to provide "Adult Education Classes" and "Discussion Groups" is being mooted.

The greatest single factor in the success of this community venture was the provision of funds under an "Innovations Grant". The grant gave the initial impetus to a needed community venture which without outside assistance would still be dormant.

SCHOOL/COMMUNITY SOCIAL WORKER

School: Summer Hill Public School
Address: Junction Road, Summer Hill 2130
Contact Person: Marie Girdler (Social Worker), 797 8160

The school is a "Disadvantaged" primary school with 548 students. There are 32 different nationalities within the school, the main ones being Australian, Greek, Turkish, Italian and Lebanese. The school has been involved in various programs which facilitate greater interaction between school and community and greater involvement at the school level by various groups.

Initiation

The school has employed a Social Worker under the Assisted Schools Program for the past 3½ years. The original submission was developed by a joint staff committee consisting of Executive staff and Infants and Primary teachers. Subsequent submissions have been handled by similar committees. Part of the original submission talked about providing closer links between the school and the community and this has remained important in terms of what staff see the Social Worker's role as being.

The Social Worker employed from May 1977 to early 1979 concentrated on developing programmes which focussed on larger groups (either children or their parents or the wider community) rather than individual case work because of her background in community development.

Implementation

The school has the use of a house adjacent to the school which is used for community meetings, groups, English classes etc. There is no formal programme centred round the house, rather it is used when necessary and groups go elsewhere as they choose.

Actual programmes developed include adult education courses, consumer affairs/tenant's rights, home maintenance and car maintenance (all funded by the Outreach programme of TAFE), women's groups, parent effectiveness groups, holiday centres, a programme which provides a Turkish speaking community worker, etc. In any one programme a developmental model is used, ie those involved are active from the beginning in initiating, organizing and implementing the programme. Responsibility for decisions as to the direction of the various programmes rests with the group. The Social Worker's role is ultimately to be unnecessary, hopefully.

Most programmes are fully self supporting at this stage. The focus and aims of each varies from programme to programme. The Consumer Affairs/Tenant's Rights course was developed, for example, because a group of people in the area felt that they needed clear information in order to avoid exploitation and to gain confidence in demanding their rights as consumers. It is important that the programmes are not necessarily developed in order to facilitate interaction between the school and community though this is an important side effect. The method used, however, does concentrate on developing knowledge about organization, how to get resources etc, and should create a climate where people feel more ready to expect and demand certain things within the school and the community.

Process

Each programme would begin with a small group of people who have wider contact in the community and who are willing to commit themselves however minimally, to a particular programme. By necessity they have some investment in the programme whether it is a course they particularly want to do or a centre which provides care for their children. The small group makes all decisions and begins to spread the word so that other people become involved. Administrative tasks, submission writing etc would initially be handled through the school

although the group would eventually handle this as well. The Social Worker's role is that of catalyst, information giver and resource person. A small group such as this having organized one successful programme/activity will go on to initiate others and to expand as a group.

The Social Worker's personal rationale is this:

"... the school is the most obvious organization for supporting, implementing or initiating programmes which are of use to the community. As an organization it has familiarity, legitimacy and a number of useful resources. It also has a responsibility to the community since it is not possible to have any lasting effect on problems and issues which confront children and their families in a school if this is tackled in isolation from the wider community."

Problems

The most fundamental problem encountered comes down to a question of power. In reality people are being encouraged to become involved in schools only up to a certain point. The staff are themselves completely powerless in certain areas (like staffing for instance). Involvement per se is not necessarily a good thing and does at times get dangerously close to tokenism. It is important to guarantee that the programme people are expected to become involved with is something which they have decided will be of use to them. Good selling and outright coercion may produce an ostensibly successful programme/activity but it will have very little real value to the community in the long term. The factors leading to the success of the programme are the level of commitment of the people involved and the ability of the 'professional' involved to keep at a distance.

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY WORKER

School: Mt. Druitt High School
Address: Stuart Road, Dharruk 2770
Contact Person: Alison Wannan, 625 9750

The school is a large secondary school (1250 pupils), located in one suburb of a new housing estate, 45 kilometres west of Sydney. Prior to the 1960s, Mt. Druitt was primarily a mixed farming area, but since the mid sixties there has been extensive development by the Housing Commission and private companies. Today Mt. Druitt consists of eleven neighbourhoods with a population of 90 000 people. The high school draws its students from predominately three suburbs. In 1978 a School Community Worker began working in the school.

Aims

The aims of having a School Community Worker are threefold: to provide opportunities within and outside the school for the optimum development of all students; to develop meaningful school community interaction and involvement and to develop the school as a base for community development. In working towards achieving these aims the School Community Worker has been involved in many areas including: providing information to teachers about community resources, child development and socio-economic information about the local area; pupil/parent welfare including crisis work and liaison with other helping welfare agencies; developing mutual support networks and groups with parents who have similar concerns; promoting and developing the use of local community resources and people in the curriculum; conducting school based inservice courses; developing ways for meaningful involvement by parents and the community in the school and assisting people in the community identify their needs and to work with them in achieving these.

The rationale underlying this approach is that the school should relate to the values and character of the community it serves and that the curriculum should be relevant and meaningful to the students.

Process

The position of School Community Worker in Mt. Druitt High School was initiated by the Western Metropolitan Disadvantaged Schools Committee in cooperation with the Department of Youth and Community Services. The school was approached to be involved in a pilot project of social workers in schools for one year - 1978. The pilot scheme was terminated in late 1978. The Mt. Druitt School Committee decided to retain the position in 1979 and their submission for funding under the Disadvantaged Schools Programme was successful. The School Community Worker is responsible directly to the Principal and accountable to the School Committee.

The work of the School Community Worker in both the school and the community has given first priority to preventive work, both in preventing the development of a problem and transferring skills to other people (teachers, parents) so as to prevent the exacerbation of an existing problem. It is believed that often the School Community Worker could provide initial stimulus and coordination of a programme and that gradually it could be carried out by other people, eg staff, students, parents.

The general process of working has been to:

- i. identify a need;
- ii. analyse the need;
- iii. develop objectives;
- iv. implement a programme or activity; and
- v. evaluate the consequences of the programme.

The identification of a need and the subsequent processes has always been done in consultation with part or all members of staff, students, parents and members of the community. When working with parents and the community, the School Community Worker has used a number of

different methods including: contact local indigenous leaders; using school facilities (sometimes out of school) to make the school a more familiar place; social functions; visiting families in their homes - outreach; using volunteer local people as "links" and the media to transfer information. With the students, the School Community Worker has operated an 'open door' policy.

When the School Community Worker began in the school, she focused most of her work within the school to gain some credibility and understanding of the school operations. It was considered important that the School Community Worker understand the school so as to correctly interpret the school's operation and policies to families in the local area and to develop programmes based on real needs.

The School Community Worker has been involved in a number of wide ranging programmes and activities. As it is not possible to detail all these here and the processes involved, a cross section of some of these programmes and methods of implementation are described below.

Programmes For Students

Weight Control Group:

Form masters/mistresses and High School Nurse identified obese children and suggested to each person individually that perhaps they would be interested in joining a group. An eleven week programme was developed with emphasis on student involvement and participation, eg cooking lessons. Support of parents was sought in home visits by the High School Nurse and the School Community Worker (SCW).

Community Arts Workshop:

The idea of holding a one day workshop on a weekend was initiated by some students. The workshop was planned in cooperation with a local children's community group. Funding was provided by the Australia Council. A six week Saturday drama group was formed as a result of the workshop.

Living Skills Programme:

The programme evolved from a ten week parenting course for Year 9 and 10 which had been running over the past two years. The success of this programme led the team to design a more broader living skills course focusing on parenting, students themselves, relationships with others and an understanding of structures within society which affect the students. In weekly classroom sessions students discuss topics in small groups of 8 students with one group leader. The main educational methods are learning through experience (visits to a preschool, involvement of community groups in the classroom, 10 day camp) and small group discussions where dialogue is encouraged. Each session is evaluated by students and group leaders. The 1978 course was successful and in 1979 school based inservices are being held so that all PD teachers can implement the course.

Programmes For Teachers

Community Resources Directory:

All major organisations (both government and voluntary) concerned with health/welfare services in the local area were contacted to obtain a simple description of areas of service and appropriate methods of referral. A directory was given to all staff members.

Transition From School To Work Study:

A survey is being devised to follow up a sample of school leavers from 1978. The purpose of this is to analyse their needs, the relevance of career education and their knowledge of community resources. The implication of the results will be examined in reference to the school and available community resources.

Programmes For Parents

Year 7 Parents In Reading Group:

Letters were sent home to parents inviting them to afternoon sessions to discuss ways they could be actively involved in helping with their child's reading. A number of informal sessions (with a cup of tea) were held and the following areas were discussed in the meetings: individual progress reports on students, discussion of methods to motivate their children and the evaluation of the reading aid sheets the parents took home after each meeting.

Visiting New Families:

As Mt. Druitt is a new area, many families move there without any relatives or friends close by. Resourceful mothers volunteered to visit new families to the school. An initial planning meeting was held and attended by all volunteers and the School Community Worker. Each volunteer was given 8 names of new families that lived in their suburb and the volunteer visited when they had time. The volunteer gave the new family an information kit and a sheet explaining the organization and operation of the school. Informal neighbourhood contacts were developed.

Study Of Parents' Perception Of The School:

A survey has been prepared to gather information about parents' perceptions and expectations of the school and their role and the parents' perceptions and thoughts about their neighbourhood and their needs. This will be implemented by doing home visits to a number of families with interested teachers. From this study it is envisaged that the School Community Worker will establish communication networks at the local level, work with local leaders and respond to identified needs by establishing appropriate programmes.

Programmes For The Community

International Year Of The Child:

Developing facilities that are needed by children in the area. This involves close cooperation with all schools in the area. Proposed areas of work with the community and schools include the development of neighbourhood parks, film shows and the possibility of establishing accommodation for students whose family has broken up and who wish to stay in the area to complete their schooling.

Mt. Druitt Youth Advisory Council:

This Council formed a community group which formulated a submission to obtain funding for a youth worker. The submission was successful.

Problems

When the School Community Worker began in the school, the staff and Executive had confused expectations of what a social worker could do and in general, people were uncertain of how such a position would be relevant to the school situation. Many teachers were sceptical of the position and doubted that anything could be achieved. This view was based on the low level of parent involvement in the P & C and as a consequence, it was assumed by many that the parents were uninterested and apathetic. There was also some doubt that a non-teacher could understand, or have anything to offer within the education system. To begin with, there was some tension between the School Counsellor and the School Community Worker, and this was related specifically to the Counsellor's fear of overlap and duplication in work. This was easily resolved as it became obvious that the work of the Counsellor and School Community Worker would be different but complementary.

By the end of second term 1978, the School Community Worker believed that her position had been accepted and considered worthwhile by most of the staff. This was a result of many discussions with members of staff and the cooperation with staff members in implementing programmes. Most parents and community groups readily accepted the role within the school.

Success Factors

A number of factors have led to the success of the programme:

- i) the encouragement, support and trust of the Principal in allowing the School Community Worker to determine, in consultation with others, her areas of work.
- ii) Teacher initiative and willingness to be involved in new programmes.
- iii) Ready acceptance by parents, community groups and organisations.

SCHOOLS WITHIN A SCHOOL

School: Albury Public School
Address: David Street, Albury 2640
Contact Person: Fred Larkin (Principal), [060] 21 3849

In 1975, thought was given to a reorganisation of Albury Public School in an attempt to create a better climate for pupil learning and to improve staff morale. The fundamental aim was to increase the opportunity for staff and pupils to develop closer personal relationships by creating smaller working groups arranged on a vertical basis, Kindergarten to Year 6.

The implementation of this plan has led to the integration of Infants and Primary Departments and to the elimination of the artificial division between Upper Primary and Lower Primary sections of the school.

The Existing Organization of 1975

Albury Public School was at that stage a large school of over 1 000 pupils in 4+ classes per year. The usual two departments of Primary and Infants existed in separate buildings, occupied separate areas of the playground, had staggered lunch hours and used separate staffrooms. The inevitable result was a noticeable lack of contact between the two departments.

In addition, the lower and upper sections of the Primary Department occupied separate buildings and experienced difficulty in ensuring continuity of education between the two age ranges.

The problems associated with this structure were:

- a) methods of communication became impersonal and restrictive, being tied to a system rather than being passed on verbally and through direct contact;
- b) the size of the staff made it difficult to reach consensus on daily organisation and variations of routine;
- c) lack of regular contact and ongoing cooperation among teachers of various age groups resulted in a lack of confidence in the competency of fellow-teachers – particularly the Infants/Primary groups;
- d) there existed two very traumatic progressions; Infants to Primary and Lower Primary to Upper Primary. Emotional problems were accentuated when it became necessary for children to repeat a year instead of moving to a succeeding department with their peers.

Planned Modification of the Existing System

It was decided to create four "mini-schools" (as they have come to be known) each of which was to occupy one of the school's four classroom blocks and was to have approximately 250 pupils ranging from Kindergarten to Year 6.

Aims

- a) To establish more strongly a "K-6" continuity of education in both curriculum development and teaching philosophy and procedures.
- b) To improve communication through increased personal interaction in smaller groups.
- c) To establish cohesive working groups of 6-8 teachers who would become more aware of the total "K-6" development of children.
- d) To increase the possibility of reaching consensus by arranging problem-solving and decision-making in a smaller group.
- e) To eliminate the trauma-inducing transfers from Infants to Primary and from Lower Primary to Upper Primary.

Reorganisation in Action

The foundations of reorganisation were laid during the latter half of 1975 when procedures were decided upon and advantages of the change were pointed out:

- a) in discussion groups commencing with the executive members and later widened to include more and more staff;
- b) incidental talks with teachers to "sell" the idea and also to benefit from their constructive comments;
- c) parent-teacher meetings which gave ideas for modification and resulted ultimately in approval of the plans.

Following this approval and the arrival at a decision to implement the change:

- a) coordinators selected a building and "mini-school" for which they were to be responsible. (The coordinators were 1 Deputy-Principal, 2 Primary Deputy Masters and 1 Infants Deputy Mistress);
- b) classes remained intact and were allocated to buildings;
- c) teachers were asked to indicate their "mini-school" and class preferences. Conflicts were gradually resolved over a period of three to four weeks by mutual agreement and the friction was greatly reduced by the goodwill and considerate approach of the staff;
- d) parents were given the choice of having all members of the family in the one building but the majority agreed with the school's priority of having children remain with their classmates. Some parents surprisingly expressed a preference for their children to be in different "mini-schools";
- e) the reorganisation was planned to become effective from the beginning of the following school year.

Factors Facilitating Reorganisation

The school was fortunate in that there were several factors which made the reorganisation possible. Important among these were:

- a) the existence of 4 classroom blocks, each capable of holding a "mini-school" of 250 pupils ranging from Kindergarten to Year 6;
- b) sufficient executive staff to act as coordinators;
- c) a cooperative Infants Department whose mistress gave full support to the plan and who played an active and constructive role in initiating the change and her Deputy Mistress who accepted the position of coordinator of one "mini-school" and the accompanying responsibility of supervision of classes from Kindergarten to Year 6;
- d) a most supportive and cooperative staff without whose help the innovation would not have been possible.

Mini-Schools in Action

The school has a common overall policy which is expressed in sufficiently broad general terms that consensus can be reached on fundamental items. This school policy covers philosophy, organisational details such as methods of reporting to parents and the more specific aims and teaching methods for the various subject areas.

Implementation of the School Policy in the classroom becomes the responsibility of the "mini-school" and the advantages which accrue because of the smaller size of the unit include:

- a) greater possibility of achieving consensus;
- b) because of the proximity of a wide range of age groups in each unit, a clearer recognition of the place of the child in the total developmental process;
- c) improved coordination of teaching approaches and evaluation procedures;
- d) the opportunity provided for all age groups to participate in total unit activities such as picnics, craft etc.

As a result of variations in implementation, distinct characters for each of the "mini-schools" are beginning to emerge and this is adding a great deal of educational vigour and life to the school.

Total School Activities

There are still many features of school life which, for various reasons, we have not delegated to the "mini-schools". These include:

- a) parent bodies – P & C and Mothers' Club share total responsibility for the school, each caring respectively for the needs of Primary and Infant classes in the traditional manner;
 - b) staff social functions – all know each other very well and enjoy each other's company;
 - c) use of specialist teachers – resource, craft, library;
 - d) use of the special talents of teachers – music, gymnastics, sport (a variety of talents is one of the great advantages of a large staff);
 - e) Pupils' School Council – 4 representatives from each "mini-school";
 - f) pupils' social functions – many parents are concerned to see that the total school spirit is maintained;
 - g) sports carnivals and inter-school sporting teams;
 - h) school fetes and fund-raising;
 - i) charity fund-raising – representatives from each of the "mini-schools" form a committee;
 - j) pupil assemblies held fortnightly on an Infants/Lower Primary/Upper Primary basis.
- Teachers have expressed a preference for these assemblies to continue on an age group basis.

Fringe Benefits

Some of the unexpected fringe benefits which have appeared have been valuable in enriching the life of the school. These include:

- a) children are learning to live with all age groups. Senior pupils show considerable care for the welfare of younger pupils and the young people lose some of the fear of the big school situation by being able to recognise some of the "big boys and girls" from their own "school";
- b) closer pupil/teacher personal relationships seem to be possible;
- c) pupils identify more readily with their "mini-school" with a resultant increase in pride and interest;
- d) increased opportunities for teachers to develop skills in curriculum seem to have been created, coordinating their work with other teachers in the process of evaluation.

Conclusion

If "the proof of the pudding is in the eating" then reorganisation of the school has been a worthwhile move, for Albury Public School is a happy one. Pupils are keen and interested and are making sound progress in an atmosphere which recognises their worth as individuals and staff morale is high.

The school has become an adventure in life and this is in no small measure due to the creation of schools within a school, thus allowing all the personal interaction typical of small groups. For teachers, it has been a wonderful opportunity to experience at first hand the continuing development of children from Kindergarten to Year 6.

STAFF INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

School: Biraban Public School
Address: Beckley Street, Toronto 2283
Contact Person: Dr. R. C. Ferguson (Principal), [049] 59 1902

Biraban Public School is situated in an outer suburb of Newcastle and has an enrolment in 1979 of 430. All but two of the pupils live in homes built by the Housing Commission and the school is classified as "Disadvantaged". The school works as a single unit (K-6) but with two sub-units, the Infants and Primary Departments. The Principal is responsible for overall supervision of the school. Responsibility for the Primary Department is vested in the Deputy Principal and the Infants Mistress has oversight of the Infants Department.

Shared decision-making takes place at meetings on three levels: the Executive (Principal, Deputy Principal, Infants Mistress and the Deputy Mistress); the whole school staff; and departmental staff. The Executive meets during the lunch hour every Monday. Staff meetings are held every Tuesday morning at 8.30 for forty-five minutes. The whole school staff meets every fortnight and departmental level staff meetings take place on the alternate Tuesday mornings.

Rationale

This school policy for decision-making has been adopted for two main reasons. Firstly, it is believed that better quality decisions will result if a number of people pool their ideas than if decisions are made by one person. A greater range of alternatives is likely to become evident and the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative are more likely to be noted. Teachers are encouraged to raise problems for discussion. Emerging problems then become evident and are dealt with before they erupt. Regular and frequent meetings ensure that this process takes place.

Secondly, when teachers consider the pros and cons of a decision and of its alternatives, they are likely to feel committed to the decision. Implementation of the decision, then, will probably be more effective. When a group of people meet for decision-making, the total number of prior experiences is greater, so the best alternative is more likely to be considered than when the Principal alone makes the decision.

Parents have not been involved in the decision-making itself, but are consulted on major items. This is done through discussions at Parents and Citizens Association and Mothers Club meetings. School based curricula are shown to members at the draft stage and their opinions and suggestions are sought. Revision of the Primary pupils' report cards provided another example of consultation with parents. Parents on that occasion expressed their wishes before the draft report card was prepared. They were consulted again at the draft stage. It was then that they noted that a space had been provided for the teacher to request an interview with the parent, but not for the parent to request an interview with the teacher. This space was duly added.

Decision Making Structure

The school decision making framework is set out in a section of the school policy headed "Organization of the School: Responsibilities of Professional Staff Members". This is reproduced here with some explanatory passages enclosed in square brackets.

"The Whole School"

The school functions as an integrated unit to ensure that pupils move through the grades (K-6) with a minimum of dislocation each year and to ensure that the curriculum through each of those seven years is coordinated and integrated wherever possible. The school philosophy, policies and curricula are therefore developed on a whole school basis.

The Principal's Role

The principal's role is that of educational leader to the whole school. In this role he is the main initiator of school wide policies and coordinates the work of the whole school. He leads the Executive in maintaining a high level of morale among all members of staff. It is assumed that staff members are conscientious people and are treated as such with exceptions being rare and therefore treated as such. [This is an important assumption, since it has led to a different type of supervision and a different approach to teacher-executive relations. See 'Success Factors' below.]

He is responsible for overseeing the continuing professional development of all staff members, assists the Deputy Principal in the encouragement and supervision of some Primary Department teachers, and encourages cooperation and liaison between the Infants and Primary Departments. Another of his prime responsibilities is to maintain liaison with parents, the community and with the Department of Education and its officers. He assists teachers in their duties by encouraging and praising pupils who have performed well and by disciplining those who cannot be dealt with at classroom or Department levels. His duties also include encouragement and oversight of the work of non-teaching staff members. Administrative work, while least in importance, necessarily occupies much of his time. This includes dealing with school correspondence, ordering of supplies, initiating repairs, maintenance and improvements to buildings and grounds.

The funds available to him are: half the per capita grants, canteen profits, maintenance grants. These will be used primarily for duplicating materials, the library, office supplies, maintenance and other school-wide matters. He is assisted in decision making and in the initiation of ideas by weekly meetings of the Executive (Principal, Deputy Principal, Infants Mistress and Deputy Mistress) and whole school staff meetings on a fortnightly basis. Communication is facilitated by production of a school calendar each term, a weekly staff memo, as well as morning tea and lunch time informal whole teaching staff gatherings. [See 'Problems' and 'Success Factors' below.]

Infants and Primary Departments

School-wide policies and curricula are implemented at a departmental level. The Deputy Principal is responsible for the Primary Department (assisted by the Principal) and the Infants Mistress (assisted by the Deputy Mistress) for the Infants Department.

The Role of Other Executive Members

The roles of the Deputy Principal and the Infants Mistress as educational leaders are:

- to implement the school-wide policies and curricula;
- to initiate departmental policies and organization appropriate to the needs of the children and changes to school policies through the weekly Executive meetings;
- to be responsible for inspiring and supervising the work of teachers and their classes;
- to attend meetings of the respective parent bodies and to be responsible for presenting requests for expenditure of funds after discussion with staff members and consultation with the Principal and/or the Executive.

To enable them to perform their duties, especially in regards to implementation of the school curricula, they have access to the following money: fifty per cent of the per capita grants (divided in proportion to enrolments), requests to P & C and Infants School Clubs, and profits from the monthly film showings.

The Deputy Mistress assists the Infants Mistress and Principal in their duties (see above) and is an educational leader in implementing and initiating policies and curricula.

Teachers

It is the responsibility of each teacher to programme, plan lessons for and teach the class or group of children assigned to him/her and to implement school and Departmental policies and curricula. Each teacher is also responsible for assisting with the school-wide supervision and development of all pupils (for example, in the playground and at assemblies). Development of school and Departmental policies and curricula are

seen as cooperative ventures of all professional staff so the professional knowledge and experience of all may be pooled to make those policies and curricula as effective as the total abilities and experiences allow. Teachers may initiate school and Department policy and organizational changes by:

1. placing the item on the agenda for a staff meeting (through the clerical assistant), or
2. approaching a member of the Executive.

Major expenditure of Department funds will be preceded by discussion at the fortnightly Departmental staff meetings. In the case of expenditure on curricular materials and aids it is expected that the relevant curriculum committee will appraise available materials and aids with the Librarian and give advice to the staff meetings accordingly. To assist teachers in curricular work and joint planning, one hour is set aside each Monday and Thursday afternoon to free teachers for that work. Other periods are also set aside when possible, for example when consultants visit the school or when committee members need to visit the Teachers' Centre, Advisory Centre or CAE. As professional people, teachers are encouraged to keep themselves abreast of trends in education and, particularly, in classroom practices."

Problems

The greatest problem associated with shared decision making is that of time management. Weekly staff meetings are a chore at times. They have to be kept to a reasonable length and held at a mutually agreed time. It is certainly quicker for the Principal or some other individual to make each decision alone, but this does not produce the best quality decisions. When a wider group is involved, members need to be kept informed of factors which might influence their decisions. If they are to develop a curriculum, they will need to read in the subject area in question. Communication is generally facilitated by production of a weekly staff memo (usually less than one page in length). Summaries of journal articles relevant to the school are distributed occasionally. The comment passed by one teacher to the Principal is probably typical: "There's so much to read! But don't stop doing it. I'd much rather know what's going on."

One difficulty for the Principal is to decide who should be involved in the making of each decision, and at what stage they should each be involved. Teachers do not wish to be involved in all decisions. For example, it is unlikely that most teachers would want to be involved in the decision as to whether an item of equipment should be purchased from Firm A or Firm B. They may be very concerned, though, about whether item X is purchased rather than item Y. There are four main stages in the decision making process where the school administrator may decide to make the decision alone or to involve others: problem definition; definition of alternative solutions; identification of the consequences (barriers); and actually making the decision. Teachers (and/or parents or students) may be involved in any or all of these four stages. The Principal has the difficult task of deciding whether or not teachers will want to be involved in the process each time a problem arises. It is considered as very important that provision be made for review of decisions where teachers feel they should have been involved or where they disagree with the decision taken.

The size of the group sometimes creates problems. With a staff of twenty-two (including part-time teachers) it is difficult to ensure that all opinions are heard. This is overcome occasionally by dividing into two, three or four smaller groups during consideration of a topic, then returning to the whole staff group to hear reports from the sub-groups, following which a decision may be made. In the small groups shy members feel freer to contribute. In the large group there is, at times, a tendency for the more talkative to dominate the discussions. It can be difficult to reach consensus on some issues and here the Principal has to take heed of the views expressed, then make the decision himself.

Success Factors

The major factor in the success or otherwise of a cooperative venture such as regular joint decision making is the degree of trust which is exhibited between Principal and teachers. If

the Principal is seen by the teachers as being willing to accept the ideas of others and to accept criticism, teachers will say what they believe should be improved. The supervisory policy adopted at the school aims to build this mutual trust and to provide complementary help to each other. Supervision is not regarded as a checking-up process. Rather, it is the method by which a member of the staff assists a fellow professional to improve the quality of that person's work. It is assumed that all staff members, including the Principal, could improve their work, so each sets objectives early in the year. The Principal and other Executive members set their objectives and these are discussed jointly with the teachers. Each teacher prepares a set of objectives, listing aims set for the year. This is discussed with the teacher's supervisor and an agreement is reached on them. The supervisor's prime responsibility then is to help the teacher to achieve the objectives. This may be done by searching for a book for the teacher to read, by demonstrating a technique, by helping the teacher to organize an aspect of work, or in some other way. Thus, by working together, using a cooperative and friendly approach to the work of the staff team, an atmosphere of trust has gradually been built. (This mutual aid method of supervision is set out in greater detail in an article "The Translation of Aims Into Practical Experiences: A School Policy Framework", *New Education*, 2, 1, July, 1979.)

Regular written communications have been mentioned above as a means of keeping everyone informed of coming events. The presence of the principal and other executive members as part of the staff group during recess and the first half hour of the lunch break builds familiarity and allows informal communication. Teachers frequently ask for information or advice at such times.

Shared decision making has helped to build greater harmony between individual staff members and between departments. The more people learn about the work and problems of others, the more they come to respect each other. There is a greater understanding both of whole school problems and of problems faced by those working at different levels.

Teachers say they feel a greater degree of satisfaction when they have a say in policy-making. They feel very involved in the school and in their work. The pupils are the obvious beneficiaries. When teachers are highly committed to their work and are happy in it, this is communicated to the students who, in this school, have reacted in a similar way, working harder, yet enjoying school life more.

STAFF/PARENT/STUDENT PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

School: St. Aloysius' Girls' High School
Address: Perry Street, Hamilton 2303
Contact Person: Sister Janet Hughes (Principal), [049] 69 2421

Under the direction of its Principal, St. Aloysius' Girls' High School over the past three years has undertaken a major programme of staff and community development in order to generate a relevant and meaningful curriculum. The programme has been characterized by a series of staff/parent planning days in which an innovative decision making construct has been used to focus people's ideas on defining problems and proceeding to plan action programmes to work towards their solution. As well, the development of a staff formal forum held two or three times every term to formulate proposals and gain authorization and commitment has been an important facilitator.

Assumptions

The development of the forum and the staff/parent planning days took place over a number of years in which the administration attempted to grapple with the problems of motivating and gaining the commitment of staff and parents. Out of this process arose a number of assumptions that have guided the ongoing administration:

- People who do not have power in their organization are in a situation of violence.
- When organization members participate in planning their degree of responsibility increases as does their morale.
- Emery has postulated that our present scenario is one of turbulence. An adaptive strategy to deal with this seems to be based on consensus rather than on probable efficiency and relative values (as the optimal planning experts would have us believe).
- Teachers are interested in participating only in so far as it directly affects their work.
- Democratisation of organisations will be one of the key factors for the development of human structures in our society.

Development

During 1976 the work done proceeded on two fronts – that of parents and staff.

With staff the emphasis was on articulation of their vision of the school; looking at the challenges arising from this vision and building proposals to deal with these challenges.

A lot of time was spent on gaining an understanding of consensus, as staff were not familiar with coming to a common decision and having to put aside their pet themes for what seemed best for the whole.

In the beginning most of the suggestions made in the school had to be implemented by the administration, though by October, more responsibility was taken by short term committees working on specific tasks.

The work done with parents was initiated by the administration who were anxious that the teachers' vision and the parents' vision of the school's role should match up.

Parent workshops were held in each of the main feeder areas of the school's region and parents attended in large numbers due to phone contacts made by school staff with the help of some active parents. A bar-b-que/working bee, suggested at the first meeting, was initiated and each of these proved highly successful also.

Formal Forum

In 1977 work done with staff resulted in the formal forum. The staff was divided into 3 ad hoc groups, who then provided a representative who became one of three rotating chairpeople. The chair rotated in alphabetical order of names. Formal standing orders, rules for agenda formation and debate were drawn up and decisions were made only on unanimous support of motions.

The forums are held two or three times every term and enable staff to formulate proposals about school organization and curriculum for presentation to the whole staff. Committees are appointed to deal with suggestions made. While being a useful tool for enabling staff to make proposals about issues of concern, it has also been helpful to the administration in gaining authorization for and facilitating discussion about proposals submitted by them. The idea of the forum arose from a staff development workshop and was arrived at by the staff working together to define a suitable structure for debate and decision making.

In October, 1977, an evaluation meeting was held of parents who mostly came with some trepidation, fearing they would have to say something (almost all contributed). It was felt however, that not enough use was made of the material gained from the parents at this meeting, and though it seemed to match the staff's vision, the administration felt that they should have looked at it more closely.

A decision making strategy referred to as **the construct** was used in this session as well as with the staff previously. This construct aims to allow the people's operating vision to be articulated. When this has been done the contradictions can be identified. These contradictions are those underlying forces blocking the vision from being realised. When these forces have been identified proposals to deal with them are written. These are refined until they are a set of strategies on a time line which are eminently 'doable'.

The work done in October 1978 was the most significant and far reaching accomplished so far. Preparation was begun in July and discussions at the Executive level (Principal, 1st Assistant to Principal, subject coordinators) evolved a proposal for discussion at staff level.

The proposal was that a **three** day series of planning days be held involving parents, staff and students. In order to involve as many parents as possible the first of the three days was a Sunday. An outside consulting body, Communicare, was to be engaged and parents were to be contacted individually by roll class teachers.

After much discussion and modification the proposal was accepted by staff. Problems experienced by staff in accepting the proposal were:

- i having to work on a Sunday, and
- ii dissatisfaction with the construct to be used.

They felt that some precious data was lost using this method.

The three day event was aimed at enabling the articulation of a common vision for the school, for parents, staff and students; at identifying underlying blocks to this vision and at writing specific proposals to deal with these.

About 120 people from the whole school community attended on the Sunday session. The day was spent on issues of concern and vision and preliminary work to identifying the blocks.

Time was divided between workshop groups or plenary sessions. The plenary sessions were particularly useful in enabling issues to be clarified and consensus reached. They were important in welding the group together, since parents, staff and students were in separate groups.

Forty parents and fifty students (student population 340) attended the remainder of the time. Work for all except the Executive ceased by 11.30 am on the Tuesday. The Executive worked on devising a time line for the implementation of the proposals.

On Tuesday evening a dinner for parents, staff and students was held. At the dinner the document was presented to those present on behalf of all who participated in the three day event.

The celebration dinner was designed to honour the work and to give participants a chance to articulate their satisfaction at having worked together for the benefit of the whole school.

The time line generated from the planning days has been a means of holding the school staff and particularly the Executive to accountability. The Executive regularly evaluates progress to ensure proposals are implemented faithfully.

Some examples of proposals generated at these meetings and adopted by the school are given below:

From Students

Proposal

Students be represented at meetings which directly affect them, and in which they could contribute to the general well being of the school. Eg: policy making, choice of electives, sport and options, aims of the school, school rules, careers programme, finance.

Year 10 be strongly represented to put forward the opinions of the senior body.

Activities

- A group of interested students be present at all meetings concerning policy making, choice of electives, sport and options, aims of the school, school rules, careers programmes, finance.
- Students should be aware when the meeting is to be held, date, topic for discussion and venue.
- When there are problems concerning students and teachers, students should be consulted.
- Meeting among teachers and students to discuss topics in which students take part (informal debate).
- Interested students – all forms, be involved depending on interest and need – not necessarily involved in SRC.

From Parents

Proposal

Enrolment.

Activities

- Make it known well in advance. Enrolment form.
- Involve Year 7. Make Year 7 interested, involved with the help of parents.
- Become involved with the parents in their own Parish.
- Include new Australian families – more special attention.

From Teachers

Proposal

To have subject departments establish initially a set of curricula content priorities and communicate them to parents and students, together with the rationale for establishing such priorities at the meeting called to discuss and recommend on the aims, objectives, emphases of the education at this school.

Activities

- Each subject area decides for itself what it considers to be an absolute minimum content in that area.
- That the results of the above be pooled, and any overlap eliminated.
- Results of the second point above be made available to inform the group being established to define aims and objectives of the school.
- And the results of the second point above should also be used to inform administration and coordinators in their implementation of teachers' proposals in the third point, that is, period allocation.

1979

In October 1979 there will be a similar three day happening. This will concentrate on curriculum and will try to both inform and evaluate the total curriculum of the school.

Similar preliminary procedures have been followed; discussion at Executive level then presentation of the proposal to staff. Parents will be contacted personally and by the weekly newsletter. Other preliminary work includes the preparation of a booklet which sets out the school policy and a fairly detailed treatment of the curriculum.

STAFF PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

School: Oxley High School
Address: Piper Street, Tamworth 2340
Contact Persons: Harry Savage (Principal), [067] 661677
John Nowland (Curriculum Coordinator),

The school is a country high school of 1100 students established in 1968 to meet growing needs of an expanding city. A further high school was established in the city in 1977 making four government high schools in the city.

The school is situated on the edge of an older, established residential area of the city on a block which commands an expansive view over the city and surrounding hills.

Particularly since 1977, consideration of curriculum has necessitated strong communication between members of the staff and their participation in decision making in order to maintain a total school approach.

Development

Late 1977 a Curriculum Coordinator was appointed from within the staff. The staff were stimulated to think about curriculum issues through the circulation of controversial printed material on the subject. The school aims were discussed by faculty groups and restated with consensus. Each faculty then stated its own aims. Each faculty submission was then in turn examined and reported on by the other faculties. This process continued over a period of approximately 6 months.

Literacy emerged as a major area of concern across faculty groups. In 1978, Oxley High School decided to embark upon a literacy project involving the whole school. The project had two main aims:

Major

"To attain the highest possible standards in all the communication skills for each pupil to be able to listen, read, write and speak." (English Department, OHS)

Subsidiary

"To develop curricula and materials relevant to the literacy level of pupils. To increase awareness of all teachers of the need to involve themselves in promoting literacy skills."

The Centre for Curriculum Studies at the University of New England provided a research student to work at the school two days a week and the programme proposal was funded by the national Curriculum Development Centre. The Principal, Curriculum Coordinator and Researcher carried the responsibility for initiating the programme though the implementation was seen as a whole staff responsibility.

Process

A brief description of the project follows:

- 1 Surveys were conducted to discover literacy expectations and priorities for 1979.
 - A Survey of parents' expectations and priorities.
 - B Survey of employers' expectations and priorities.
 - C Faculty expectations and priorities from statements of aims and objectives.
- 2 A literacy task force was set up to report:
 - A Teams of teachers from within the English-History staff were formed to research skills in writing, speaking and listening, spelling, reading.
 - B The task force reported to small groups of staff in combined faculty groupings.
 - C The task forces redrafted reports after feedback from the staff.
 - D The reports were published.
- 3 A number of concurrent developments occurred in the school:
 - A Survey of School Climate - Finlayson staff/student climate survey.

- B Numeracy Survey.
- C Piaget Tests — Year 7 students tested to determine stages of development of pupils.
- D Analysis of Timetable — Professor Walton (UNE) looked at the timetable to see distribution of teacher time to students in different modules.
- 4 The staff evaluated the findings:
 - A Staff formed a Curriculum Committee of 17 staff representing all faculties and disciplines.
 - B Curriculum Committee organised framework in which to operate and lead staff in whole staff discussion and priority formation.
 - C Whole staff plus representatives from P & C spent a day in workshop groups. Produced Priorities for 1979.
- 5 Curriculum management for 1979 was set in motion:
 - A The Curriculum Committee formed sub-committees in areas of staff priorities.
 - i Literacy Sub-committee, to oversee implementation.
 - ii Timetable, to research timetables seeking ways to improve flexibility.
 - iii Staff-pupil relations.
 - iv Courses, availability of courses to suit pupil needs.
 - B Sub-committees produced framework of action for 1979.
 - C Lines of communication defined.

Problems

A number of problems were faced during the project:

- 1 Time — relief teachers and Researcher. Problem of how to free teachers to do their work in any ongoing projects.
- 2 Expertise — supplied by Researcher. Need to pass on skills to staff.
- 3 Where to begin — Skilbeck's rational planning model was used.
- 4 Staff involvement — discussion, reports (verbal or written), meetings (departmental, staff (1), conferences, committees, data gathering, etc).
- 5 Actual implementation — literacy report, sub-committee action, subsequent development of school involvement in curriculum, teachers working with Researcher in speaking and listening in classroom, common correction code, departmental data on essay technique, departmental policy change with respect to literacy and oracy. However actual change in classroom practise unknown.

Success Factors

In terms of student achievement, the success of the project will not be known for several years. In terms of teacher involvement and awareness, success was fairly high as shown in the literacy reports and at the staff conference. There is evidence of continuing and increasing involvement of staff in curriculum development — sub-committees, individual involvement etc. Also there was particularly important success in terms of the structures and processes used: eg effective communication channels, effective techniques (group discussions, brainstorming, nominal group technique) and training for them.

STAFF PROBLEM SOLVING

School: Blacktown South Public School
Address: 183 Flushcombe Road, Blacktown 2148
Contact Person: Ian Roberts, 622 2449

The school accommodates 750 pupils in a stable and average suburban environment.

Midway through 1977, the school was approached to take part in an experiment to examine the possibilities for promoting change within the school through a school based inservice system called 'School Development'. Other schools took part in the experiment in similar capacities and as 'controls'. The experiment will cease in August 1979. The staff was unanimous in agreeing to participate.

Process

In late Term Three, 1977, the entire staff spent a weekend at a motel to undertake a course outline and to experience the change-promoting processes. At this time the staff decided that inter intra group relationships should be the first problem area dealt with.

Each week, two consultants visit the school to meet with a staff-elected group to work on the strategies and organisation needed to bring about change in the given area. Infants and Primary sections of the school hold assemblies on Wednesday mornings to facilitate group meetings which commence at 8.30 am and end at 10.00 am. The group's personnel equally represents the two departments and one ancillary staff member is included. The group allocated one member to record the proceedings, one member to report back to staff and one member to report to executive staff.

The change process is facilitated by the following steps:

- a) Key problems in the chosen area are defined and discussed. Staff are asked for further suggestions or deletions.
- b) Indicators of success are listed (these are similar to behaviour objectives) eg "There would be a common meeting place for staff" and "Primary and Infants' staffs would know each others names and a little about each other".
- c) An analysis of the kinds of changes necessary to bring about success is then made. The sub-headings in this step are:
 - 1 Attitudes and Values
 - 2 Knowledge and Understanding
 - 3 Skills
 - 4 New Resources — Human or Physical
 - 5 Organisation
- d) The forces supporting and opposing change are then set down and the entire staff meets to decide upon the significance level of all these.
- e) An action plan with its desired outcomes is formulated next and the group is charged with the responsibility for implementing as many of the ideas as possible.

The first problem the group attempted to solve was that of finding a common meeting place for the staff. After investigating various possibilities, including the use of the library, it was necessary to hold a full school staff meeting to discuss the remaining feasible possibilities. These were:

- a) to wait for some major development in the school building programme;
- b) to move an additional Infants' class to the school's one spare classroom and hope that a demountable could be obtained at a later date into which a class could be placed, allowing a classroom to be converted into a staff common room;
- c) to convert the spare room into a common room and accommodate a small Infant's class in the clinic until the arrival of a demountable.

The staff had the possibilities explained to them and then divided into four discussion groups. After each group had reported its finding a vote was taken separately by Infants and

Primary staffs. Both staff groups had to agree or proposal 'b' took preference. The Primary staff voted for proposal 'c' while the Infants voted for 'b'. Therefore 'b' came into operation. This left the problem unsolved.

The Inter-Intra Relationships Group continued its work in the same fashion and to date has achieved several aims from its action plan. These include staff luncheons in the school library each Wednesday, displays of work by the various grades, combined social outings and whole of staff meetings. While the acquisition of a staff common room was not successful, the group has facilitated staff contact in other ways and is gradually achieving many of its goals.

The genuine success of this method of producing change is ensured by a careful process of staff discussion based on consensus, commitment and interest. The staff raises the problems, defines their specific implications, agrees on methods of solution and cooperatively implement the methods. Consultation and agreement are of paramount importance.

By learning the method of producing change outlined previously, the staff are beginning to provide its own consultants who will aid further groups in the problem-solving tasks.

Two other groups have been formed during the ensuing months. The first of the new groups examined the school's evaluation programme. After the initial stages of the method were completed, the group devised an inservice course to familiarise teachers with various concepts and information concerning evaluation. The staff then agreed to spend six mornings over a six week period undergoing the inservice course run by the Evaluation Group. The entire staff was divided into three groups and the inservice course took place from 8.30 am to 9.30 am each week.

When the course ended, suggestions from the groups were used to formulate a school evaluation policy. This was a procedural policy, and its implementation has so far been highly successful.

The other group has commenced work on school resources and is, as yet, only in its infancy. However, groups are relying less and less on external consultants and it is obvious that, when the experiment concludes in August 1979, the staff will be able to use this method competently and in the future may carry its methodology into other schools.

Problems

The greatest problem encountered in the experiment was lack of time and, to a lesser extent, space. At present, the three groups so far formed are still meeting with varying frequencies and it was found necessary to appoint a coordinator to ensure the smooth operation of the School Development programme. However, during the operation of the experiment, there have been few other difficulties. Certainly, staff interest has flagged occasionally, but the overall impression gained is one of enthusiasm, dedication and commitment. There is no doubt that changes for the better have taken place and the rational organisation of time, thought and effort has led the teachers of Blacktown South School to feel that they have more effect on what transpires in their school.

Success Factors

To sum up the reasons for the scheme's success, the following areas take precedence:

- i) Total staff involvement which led to commitment.
- ii) Attention to detail.
- iii) Formulation of sets of feasible priorities.
- iv) Support by executive staff.
- v) Guidance by the external consultants, especially in the early stages.
- vi) Consistent communication with staff.
- vii) Thorough analysis of all forces supporting and opposing change.
- viii) Quality of staff.

STUDENT COUNCIL

School: Henry Kendall High School
Address: Faunce Street, West Gosford 2250
Contact Person: Ralph Murray (English/History Dept.) [043] 25 2110

Henry Kendall High School is a coeducational school with a population of 1100 students. It was recognised that a need existed to develop within the school's organisational structure an avenue for student participation in decision making and it was felt that this participation could best be developed by the introduction of a Student Council.

Whilst recognising the growing trend towards greater participative involvement in decision making in both industry and education, little attention has been paid to the devolution of decision making responsibility and power amongst the student population within schools. The establishment of a Student Council was seen then as a necessary prerequisite structure within which the student body could be organised and then initiated into and trained in the development of decision making skills.

In 1974, with the support of the School Principal, Mr. Lyle Cameron, the Deputy, Mr. Ken Matthews and the English Master, Mr. Walter Enderby and the student body, the Student Council came into being with the democratic election of one boy and one girl from every core English class within the school.

Structure

The need for full representation of the student body was recognised and the organisation of the Council membership on core English classes ensured that all students had the opportunity of being nominated for the election to the Student Council and of having a vote in the election of their class' representatives. After the class elections the Council met and voted to elect a boy and a girl from each years' Council representatives to represent their individual years on the Council Executive Committee. Finally, the full Council elected from the senior year the Council's President, Secretary and Treasurer, who completed the Council's Executive Committee.

As it was felt that the Council's role should be both a meaningful and responsible one, the Principal approved of designating to the Student Council its own area of responsibility and control. Whilst maintaining a veto power over all Council activities, the Principal allowed the Council to assume responsibility for the traditional areas of student interest, those concerning the running and administration of all student social, extra-curricula, and charity fund-raising activities. The eventual development of a Student Council seems to lie very much in its ability to involve itself in areas that directly affect the student population and its success is usually seen in terms of its acceptance by and support from the student population.

Implementation

The need for structural development and change within a developing student decision making body was approached with caution so as to allow the Council to evolve in the way that best suited the needs of the student body. Structural changes to the Student Council organisation were to reflect the recognition from within the Council membership that a change was necessary to facilitate the more efficient functioning of the Student Council. Problems that were encountered were dealt with when they arose and adjustments were made from recommendations received from the Student Council. The solutions to such problems required at times the development of new or more efficient administrative structures within the Student Council.

The Student Council that was evolving was structured in terms of its representation, its balance of the sexes, and in that it was hierarchically organised so that both the Junior and Senior school were proportionately represented. The Student Council was to meet once a month and the Council Executive Committee met as frequently as required. The staff were

represented by a Student Advisor to the Student Council and by the appointment of a number of the school's senior executive to the position of Master in Charge of the Student Council.

To facilitate communication throughout the school English teachers were encouraged by the English Master to allow Council representatives class time so that they could present reports from Council Meetings or discuss any matter that the class wanted raised at future Council meetings. All projects and proposals of the Student Council were then to be presented to the Principal for approval.

The Student Council was also encouraged to take on the coordination and administration of all student activities within the school environment as well as involving itself with community help projects and fund raising.

Problems

An overall appraisal of all of the Council's initiatives within the activities programme in operation at Henry Kendall High would be beyond the scope of the present study. Therefore two problem areas in which the Council has involved itself have been selected for further description.

- 1 The running of School Socials has long plagued teachers as an area which all recognise as worthwhile and necessary but one which is often made unpleasant due to unruly behaviour or the high incidence of smoking and drinking and other related and socially disapproved practices. By allowing the Student Council to accept the responsibility for organising, supervising and the administration of all School Socials the student body was called upon to produce a set of rules by which all students who attended School Socials would agree to obey.

When buying a ticket to a Social all students were called upon to sign their name and thereby agree to obey the Council rules governing behaviour expected of all students attending School Socials. Any students creating trouble at Socials were deemed to have broken their word and therefore summoned to face the Council Executive the following day to explain their behaviour. The practice was to ban any students who broke their pledge from the next Social and to inform their parents if the violation was deemed to be within the parents' area of concern.

Over the past four years School Socials have been held two to three times a term. The general behaviour of all students attending these socials has steadily improved with only a dozen or so students ever needing to be summoned to explain their behaviour in all of this time. Staff supervision has become a thing of the past and staff are now expected to attend and mix socially with the students at these functions.

- 2 With the establishment of a student decision making structure within the larger school administration and with communication channels leading straight into the School Executive the Council has become a growing area for school and community involvement. When the Health Commission had a problem with the loss of voluntary helper mothers during vacation time an approach was made to the Student Council to determine whether the student body could assist in the resolving of this problem area. The Council, with the assistance of the Staff Advisor, was able to approach the senior representatives who in turn approached their constituents and approximately sixty students were enlisted to give up some of their vacation time to assist the Health Commission as voluntary Health Workers in the many geriatric activities provided through the central and many local senior citizen activity centres. The students were able to fill an important role within the local community and to gain both vocational experience as well as personal satisfaction by taking part in this important community self-help programme. The success derived from this involvement led the School Council to approach the Fairhaven Handicapped Centre and a similar voluntary help programme during vacation time has been set up.

The major problem resulting from the implementation of programmes involving students giving up their vacation time to assist in community programmes results mainly from students being unable to always meet their commitment in that a great number of students often find that family demands can often interfere with their rostered programme. In the event of

students not being able to make their rostered day the Council found it necessary to have a reserve list of helpers who could be phoned and asked to replace any of the students who couldn't make their rostered appointments. This programme however has been able to successfully resolve this problem and community involvement has become a further worthwhile area of experience available to students at Henry Kendall High School and one from which many favourable reports have been bestowed upon the Student Council.

Success Factors

The major factor leading to the successful continued growth and development of the Student Council was that an area of responsibility was given to the Student Council and the Council was held accountable for the administration of this area. This devolution of power into the hands of the student body provided it with an area of practical involvement and commitment.

The lack of structuration allowed the Council to encounter problems and respond to them thereby evolving an organisational structure tailored to suit the environment that the Council was to serve. This development has now allowed the council to reflect upon its development and to now formalize its structure within standard constitutional guidelines.

The Student Council has now evolved to the stage where the students have an organisational structure which is part of the school's larger administrative structure.

If students are to be expected to make a meaningful contribution in the decision making process within a school, then it is essential that students have the opportunity to gain experience in making decisions in areas of interest that directly affect them. The establishment of student councils provide a useful organisational structure within which the largest possible number of students in a school could be afforded real decision making opportunities whilst also providing a useful forum for student opinion. To demand that adults, both teachers and parents alike, should now come forward and accept the responsibility of taking part in the decision-making process, when they have had little opportunity to develop the necessary experience or skills in this area, seems rather unrealistic, especially if it is not accompanied by a widespread movement towards affording students decision making experiences and training as part of their education for adulthood, through the use of student based organisational structures such as student councils.

USING PARENTS IN EVALUATION

School: Kempsey West Infants' School
Address: Marsh Street, West Kempsey 2440
Contact Person: Ms Lyn Wilson (assistant teacher) [065] 62 5250

Kempsey West Infants' School has 320 children — 7% aboriginal descent, 11% of one parent families, plus a large sector of families receiving unemployment benefits. The department is situated in the same grounds as Kempsey West Primary which has an enrolment of approximately 400.

In 1977 a Specialization programme was launched in which 3 teachers established 3 learning centres and the classes (3 year 1's) rotated through the centres. In doing so, it was hoped to make more use of a limited range of resources, provide the children with a stimulating environment, give them a well-balanced day every day, cater for individual teacher's interests and talents and establish contact with a wide range of parents.

Early in 1977 a large Gade meeting was held to explain the new system to parents, seek their co-operation and to establish a link with the 100 or so new families of our pupils. The response was very encouraging and throughout the two years the parents have been very enthusiastic and interested in the work being done. In 1978 some changes were made — a new teacher was welcomed into the Language Centre, while the other two teachers continued in their respective areas and an Evaluation Committee of four mothers was set up to meet often with the Relieving Mistress and the three teachers. At the end of each year, parents were asked for their anonymous comments on a stencilled form and these assisted in planning for the next year.

Aims & Focus

In establishing the learning centres it was possible to centralise teaching materials and resources so that more use was made of available equipment. In this way, special needs of children could be catered for. The school also had the invaluable assistance of the Resource teacher who took withdrawal groups for special attention. By moving around three teachers and three centres it was hoped that the children would become more confident and identify with a "whole grade" rather than just a class group.

As teachers began to develop the programmes they found they had a wonderful supporting body of women who came into the classes and worked with small groups of children, under the direction of the teacher. Group work was set up in the Language and Number centres. This was another focus of the Specialization programme — to keep in contact with as many parents as possible, thus having an on-going evaluation of the scheme.

Initiation

In the Language Centre several mothers volunteered and came in at given times to listen to a small group of children reading for pleasure. Sometimes mothers were involved in listening to their own child read, or classmates of their child . . . other times they had a completely different class.

In the Number Centre for example, because of the rotation of classes through the learning centres, each class would alternately be spending the afternoon session in each room and would be there for a week. The following week that class would spend the middle session in the same particular room, and the next week would begin the day in that room. It became evident early in the piece that it was rather difficult to face young children with Number drill and consolidation lessons after 2 pm so number groups were formed and did activity work. For example, Week 1 and Week 2 we would have introductory and drill lessons while the classes were in the centre for the 9.25-10.55 period and the 11.10-12.25 period. Then Week 3 in the afternoons consolidated this work through activities.

The groups operated on Monday and Tuesday 2.00-3.00 pm and Friday 2.00-2.30 pm. There were about six children in each group — they spent half an hour at each activity so Monday they covered two activities, Tuesday two activities, Friday one activity. The classes had colour names (green, yellow, orange) so when yellow class was doing groups, four of their mothers assisted. Likewise, four mothers from green class assisted, then four mothers from orange. This meant that the mothers were coming in for Monday, Tuesday and Friday — once every three weeks.

The teachers' aide also worked with them each week. The mothers were allocated to a particular activity and by the end of the week all the children had worked with each one. The teacher was left free of a group, but circulated all groups, withdrew a child having difficulty, provided extra materials or filled in for an absent mum.

This became a very friendly time . . . there was **no** way a class would forego its group time and even long weekends meant we had to reschedule group work! Social contacts were established and these often continued outside of school and group times. The mothers were delighted when, after the first week's operation a little fellow enthusiastically inquired, "Dem girls comin' in again today?"

Reporting to Parents

During the year, Grade nights were held to keep parents informed of activities and children's progress. In 1977 a filing card system was established for each child. On this went the progress in each centre, as well as any problems arising. This enabled the Home teacher to follow the overall development of the home pupils and discuss this with the parents. This system was changed in 1978 as it involved an enormous amount of recording. Now, when Grade Nights are held the parents are invited to nominate a certain time — say between 6.30-9.30 pm on a particular night. It is rather like an "appointment" system and each parent is able to talk to the three teachers simultaneously, thus getting a good over-all report. This is very successful from parents' and teachers' viewpoint . . . but exhausting! It is not the policy of the school to issue any written report on the Infants' children, so the verbal report is the only one given. There are several occasions when parents are especially called to the school to discuss a problem and once again the three teachers concerned meet the parents.

Evaluation Committee

This was formed in 1978 by inviting several mothers who were involved in the group activities to give their suggestions and comments on what was being done. The Relieving Mistress, three teachers and four mothers would discuss any coming themes or excursions. It was found that the parents preferred to follow the professional planning of the teachers and to lend their support in a practical way.

The Relieving Mistress initiated and directed an application for a School Based Initiative Grant, which was successful. She also demonstrated enthusiastic support and arranged an exchange visit to Alstonville and Sawtell Schools which were using Specialization in differing ways.

Adjustments

During 1978 the three Year 1 classes were formed into four Year 2 classes. Three classes continued with Specialization, the fourth class became a straight class with one teacher in one room. However, the four Year 2 teachers cooperated in planning themes, excursions, etc. All classes, through their activities always welcomed parents to participate in work or play, and to see the things that were being done. Teachers found they had tremendous support from the parents . . . maybe because they were working on something new . . . or maybe because they were involved in the school life more fully. Actual decision making though, remained in the hands of the trained teachers.

Problems

The centres were relocated last year and accommodation problems forced one class to be situated over in the Primary School. This room was set up as the Language centre as it was close to the Library, but the three centres were very scattered. In 1977 the centres had been in adjoining rooms . . . now the children were not very happy at having to move their ports when they went to Language after lunch.

Conclusion

In 1978 a new teacher was welcomed to the Language centre, while the other two teachers stayed in the same centres. They were both very strongly in favour of this because:

- a) they had a thorough knowledge of where each was up to;
- b) no time was lost at the beginning of the year with testing;
- c) children were familiar with particular teacher's ways, and they with theirs;
- d) teachers could see the progression from Year 1 to Year 2;
- e) teachers could become very skilled and conversant with their own subjects and follow any special interests from the previous year;
- f) they could continue the links with the same group of parents which led to closer co-operation and friendships.

This report has dealt chiefly with the involvement of the community in the Specialization scheme. However, most classes in the school have their own group of community people who come in to assist in various ways. There are mums and some dads who work with Kindergarten groups doing Triad, mums helping to establish a Gross Motor Programme, lay people taking Scripture classes, as well as a large band of helpers who work with reading and number groups. In the school, the community assists in a practical way, with time, talents and raw materials (scrap paper, tiles, small mirrors for science, etc) . . . the policy making and administrations are still in the hands of the professionally trained teachers. Both teachers and parents have developed a greater appreciation of each others' value . . . and now they are wondering, "However did we get along without each other?"

VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL ACCOUNTABILITY

School: Kanwal Public School
Address: Craigie Avenue, Kanwal 2259
Contact Person: Ralph Bryant (Principal), [043] 92 1253

Kanwal school is situated in a semi-rural community on the central coast. There are many newcomers to the area and a population explosion in the last five years has produced a fluctuating enrolment of approximately 1000 children who are bussed into the school each day. In this time the school has embarked on a long term plan of organizational self renewal centred around the three aspects of child development, staff development and community development. The programme's principle focus has been on developing an accountability framework which has two main dimensions. The first, vertical accountability to the system, has involved the careful amplification and interpretation of the State Aims, in the context of local community needs and aspirations. This has resulted in a mammoth involvement in an ongoing process of staff development and school based curriculum development. A management by objectives model has provided the cornerstone for the whole organization of the school. The second dimension of horizontal accountability to the school's community has involved the conscious development of a multi-levelled community involvement programme that has helped create an open access school where parents and community members have been able to participate as fully as possible in the usual support functions as well as in policy and curriculum development.

Aims

In the spirit of the *Aims of Primary Education*, the staff at Kanwal have endeavoured to promote a true learning community where the combined power and influence of teachers, parents and children are fully activated and harnessed to promote the optimal learning and development of the students. The main objectives of this process have been to instigate and coordinate a whole school approach; to develop a suitable and balanced curriculum attuned to local circumstances; to maximize the professional development of staff; and to involve the community as far as practicable.

Policy and Curriculum Development

The major process of school based curriculum development began in 1974 with the Interim Statement on Aims of Primary Education. Three of the teachers prepared a massive and varied amount of material on stages of development, both cognitive and moral development, and process curricula in order to illustrate the meaning of the State Aims. These were presented not only to the staff, but also to P & C meetings, as well as to meetings of community groups and at inservice courses. The school subsequently embarked on the task of situational analysis and needs assessment in order to develop more specific aims and objectives for the school. This involved considerable negotiations between staff, parents and community using interview, discussion group and survey methods. Four main school goal areas emerged from this - Social Interaction (incorporating Social Studies and Science and aimed at improving the problem solving ability of children, and the cultural regeneration of Australian society); Reading and Language; Understanding Mathematics; and Experiences in Art, Craft, Music and Movement.

In subsequent years, considerable interaction has taken place to bring the Infants and Primary staff together to agree on the obtainable goals which could be managed in this time and to coordinate their efforts. When this was done there still remained the task of explaining and clarifying the process and goals to new parents, new citizens and new teachers.

In addition to this exercise the Executive believed it necessary to involve teachers and parents in the design and implementation of programmes which they saw as just as important as the development of goals and objectives as any evaluation must give consideration to how the programme is implemented as well as to goals and objectives. At weekly after school

curriculum meetings in the past five years attended by about 95% of the 35 teaching staff and up to 5 regular parents, the school has subsequently worked hard at developing a complete curriculum based on the four goal areas. The major professional role has belonged to teachers, however, the Executive believed that to get 100% support it was necessary that parents be educated and given the communication skills to interpret the programmes and support them in the home. The staff took on this responsibility by progressively carrying out a process of adult education based on curriculum problem solving. This involved the ongoing series of demonstration lessons and grade days arranged for parents as well as bringing parents into the classroom to observe and act as aides. Curriculum development for the staff at Kanwal has therefore always been closely intertwined with community involvement activities.

The other main characteristics of the curriculum development process has been the ongoing evaluation cycle involving staff and parent representatives. Each year, one of the goal areas is fully audited in order to provide accountability to the Department and to the community, as well as to update the curriculum. Another aspect of this horizontal accountability is that the school has started to produce a prospectus for new parents which includes full details of the State Aims, the school goals, the organizational structure, the budget, reporting and communication mechanisms as well as essential information on buses, uniforms etc.

Staff Development

The success of the curriculum development process has relied heavily on the skills and talents of a dedicated staff and the leadership and facilitation skills of the School Executive. As a cooperating group, the Executive has endeavoured to put goal implementation first and tie in staff development with the four goal areas, together with the resources of the school. It has been essential that the Executive has at its disposal a number of input people, eg those teachers who have attended inservice courses in the goal areas, as well as consultants to stimulate the school in a positive fashion.

Reporting back to staff by teachers who have attended courses has been encouraged, as attendance at inservice courses is recognized to be of potential benefit to the whole staff, and not just to single individuals. One teacher this year was successful in gaining a Schools Exchange & Travel Scheme grant to visit another state to observe the problems involved in developing and implementing a new science curriculum. The choice was a strategic one as the Kanwal staff are about to embark on a major overhaul of their science curriculum and the insights gained by this teacher will benefit all in this process.

The other main area of staff development has been in the area of team building and training for consensus decision making. While the design of different programmes in the school have had different histories, the whole school operation in the main appears to have reduced the competitive elements often associated with sub-committees and departmental rivalry and acted to ensure the continuity of experience of children in the school through a coordinated curriculum involving the whole school, K-6.

Parent Community Participation

Kanwal has recognised the overlapping responsibilities and roles of teachers and parents and has sought to involve both parties in the process of education without developing tension and conflict. The parents were first involved in clubs, then a number of them were recruited to act as listeners for reading groups. Later a number extended their interest to maths and began to assist in the classroom with games and with individual children. Assistance was then sought by teachers in the area of camping and sport and expanded to include a gross motor skills programme throughout the school. A large number of parents were recruited to assist with scripture classes and other work, eg duplicating, covering library books, sharpening pencils etc. A group also volunteered to act as hostesses on enrolment day.

The parents who are working at the school use the staffroom for their morning tea and lunch and interact with the teachers socially.

The participation by these parents in the classroom led on to an increased interest in the **why** and **how** of teaching reading and math. This led to the local concept of a grade day. Once

a month a full day is spent at the school by the parents of a particular grade. Lessons are given in the classroom which are observed and then discussion and questioning of teachers takes place in the library about group work, objectives, experiences etc. This means that the P & C meeting activities start at 10.00 am and finish at 3.00 pm. The average attendance is about 80 people. In this situation direct involvement and accountability has occurred providing an efficient vehicle for better communication with the home and the wider community.

The women who worked in the classrooms developed a better understanding of the complex task which confronts the teacher. The teachers, seeing the parents prepared to help, became more confident and trusting. As a result, parents were invited to participate in the weekly curriculum meeting which deals with the ongoing problem of developing and auditing a school-based curriculum.

Up to five parents regularly attend this meeting. It is not a situation where parents are coming off the street to tell the professionals what to do. Rather it is a case of a number of respected parents who have proved their interest and commitment to the school over a long period of time helping and assisting teachers, becoming part of a cooperating team to benefit children. The parents add an important local community input into the curriculum decision making and provide through their participation a direct accountability link to the parent and community body of the school.

Historically then, the school has pursued a policy of progressively incorporating more parents in the interpretation of the State Aims, in the process of selecting goals, objectives and the development of programmes, in the overall process of meeting local needs and utilizing local resources, the most obvious and underused being parents themselves.

Through the grade days especially, the school has specifically sought to attract those parents who have traditionally been without franchise in influencing the process by which the school, the home and the community provide transforming experiences for children. The school has therefore attempted to reduce the distance between the inarticulate, silent majority of parents and the vocal articulate minority. Through these educational experiences, and by being involved in the reality of classroom practice, a wide section of parents have become more informed, more understanding and more articulate about educational matters. The parents are participants **not** spectators, and teachers accordingly have shown greater preparedness to show accountability to those who understand the task.

Problems

The school has faced up to a number of problems over the past few years. A major one has been associated with the need to develop amongst the staff confidence and understanding of what school based curriculum development is all about. Also the problems associated with change which apply to teachers also apply to parents. Considerable effort has therefore been exerted in building up goodwill and confidence in both groups so that teachers and parents can openly talk to each other, respect each others roles, and work together in a complementary fashion.

The feelings of inadequacy expressed by staff and parents in the field of policy and curriculum development have been tackled progressively by the Executive through education at formal and informal levels.

At times the staff have felt overwhelmed by the demands that the curriculum development they have undertaken has placed on them. This has put considerable pressure on the Executive staff to act as catalysts and motivators in order to ensure that the occasional disquiet does not turn in on itself in a destructive way, and negate the considerable efforts the staff have made over the years. This problem is offset to some degree by providing a constant stream of input people and developmental activities into the school calendar as well as social activities. Also the growing awareness of outside recognition of their efforts and the considerable professional skills that they have acquired in the process has helped the staff realize that the process of community centred curriculum development has equipped them well to meet the expanded role of the teacher of the 1980s. Through the process of building confidence in teachers and parents, the Executive have been constantly mindful of such tensions as those which can exist between the Primary and Infants Departments, the Canteen and the P & C etc, etc, which can

reduce the team effort of the school and community. Accordingly team building has been a constant priority of the Executive staff, and the P & C and other sub-systems in the school have learned to manage value and power conflicts in order to produce collectively the most appropriate experiences for girls and boys.

A problem that is potentially always present is the conflict between the decision making for consensus and total participation made at the school level and the actual decisions made by the teacher in the classroom. The problem specifically is one of assuring acceptability and implementation of school wide decisions about goals, policies etc. This potential problem is approached in a number of ways at Kanwal. In the case of school goals for example, their importance is reinforced in a variety of ways: continual explanation and general justification by the Executive to teachers and parents, the design of assessment procedures and report cards in terms of the goal areas, reports to P & C meetings, press coverage about aims and goals, and through the implementation of the evaluation audit. By publicizing goals and policies as widely as possible, they become firmly entrenched in the minds of people and aren't simply words on paper to be locked away in cupboards. Parents as well as teachers and executive staff expect to be able to see the goals and policies being put into practice.

In material terms, the drain on time and school resources caused by the need to document in detail the curriculum development process has been severe. Added to this, the school is continually approached to supply copies of their developed curricula to other schools throughout the state and this extra drain on limited resources has created problems.

Success Factors

The attempt to develop an open and responsive climate at Kanwal has been helped by a number of factors:

- 1 The dedication and commitment of a staff willing to devote enormous effort and time to the process of school based curriculum development.
- 2 The resourcefulness of the Executive staff in acting as facilitators and catalysts for this process and the programme of community involvement.
- 3 The dedication and discretion of an interested parent body.
- 4 The existence of a more democratic form of decision making with teachers meeting as equals as a spin off from their openly selecting parallel classes which has avoided the hidden curriculum of the streamed school which often favours a caste system. Consequently, this has made the full participation of all staff which is necessary to optimal school based curriculum development so much easier.
- 5 The gradual development in teachers of confidence and trust in curriculum skills to explain and explore the sorts of experiences and opportunities which will assist the development of children. They have moved a long way from working in isolation, to sharing decisions with other teachers, to sharing decisions with parents. Parents on the other hand have lost the idea that teaching is a simplistic occupation where the chalk translates the text for the child. Both teachers and parents have therefore altered their perspectives of each other's roles and grown to respect them.

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